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POETICS.

POETICS:

AN ESSAY ON POETRY.

By E. S. DALLAS.

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TO

SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON, BART.,

PROFESSOR OF LOGIC AND METAPHYSICS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,

THIS LITTLE WORK

IS

DEDICATED

IN TOKEN OF

THE ADMIRATION, THE REGARD, AND THE OBLIGATIONS

OF

A PUPIL.

Book Third.

THE ART OF POETRY.

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INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

"To discover the laws of operative power in literary works, though it claims no small respect under the name of Criticism, is not commonly considered the work of a science." These are the words of Dr Whewell in his lecture on the Great Exhibition of last year, and it must be allowed that they are true words. We have critical opinions in great abundance, and often of great value, but we have no critical system. The critics feel their way, do not see it; we walk by faith, not by sight; our judgments too often show instinct without understanding. Hence it happens that now, when literary criticism cuts deeper than it ever cut before, it is all the more a labyrinth of confusion,—confusion worse confounded,—as vague indeed as it can well be. But, chaos though it be, it is a chaos pregnant with meaning, and richly deserving scientific arrangement. Towards the accomplishment of a work so very important and so very much needed; to the placing of criticism upon something like a scientific footing; in brief, towards a science of poetry and of poetic expression, I desire to contribute a mite.

Many are the definitions of poetry that have been given to the world; many more the reviews of poetry in its other bearings, theoretic, practical, historic and individual; yet never one too many; for, much and long as the ground has been travelled over, it is, although trodden somewhat hard, still not only far from being exhausted, but even very fertile, if you get under the surface. Therefore, and because, after all that has been said about poetry, few seem to have any, and very few to agree in the same, well-defined idea of its nature; and since, even by failing, any definition may be at least as useful as the unlucky ship that grounded at the battle of Aboukir and did for a waymark to them that followed; I hope that I shall not be deemed guilty of overweening boldness in attempting a new analysis. I have the greater confidence, however, in laying the present theory before the reader, inasmuch as glimpses and tokens of it are found in the pages of many of the best writers; and I believe that it will thus stand the test given by Leibnitz to ascertain the soundness of any body of thought, that it should gather into one united household, not by heaping and jumbling together, but by reconciling, proving to be kindred, and causing to embrace, opinions the most widely sundered and apparently the most hostile.

First of all, we must know the kind of definition wanted; what is its breadth, and what is its depth.

Now, with regard to breadth, it ought here in the

very outset to be laid down as an axiom, that any definition of poet and poetry which may apply to a chosen few, but will not also take in the whole bulk of mankind as poets, is narrow and naught. Poetry is human; the poet is but a man. It is maintained, however, by some, that between the so-called poet and his fellow-man, or, in the phrase of Coleridge, between the man of genius and the man of talent, there is a difference not merely of degree, but even of kind. This opinion is beset with doubt and difficulty, and is in fact an unfounded opinion. But those who deny it are placed in the very awkward position of gainsaying that of which confessedly they know nothing. If you cannot understand the difference between touch and sight, you must have been born blind: if you do not see the essential difference between genius and talent, it may be said that you have not been born a genius. When he, therefore, who lays claim to no other feelings and none other powers than those common to his brethren, dares give his opinion, he may be told that in so doing he has begged the whole question, and that his methinketh must go for nothing, as not professing to be founded on a peculiar experience. The shortest way then of settling the point is by recalling the fact that men of undoubted genius, such as Johnson, when speaking of Cowley, of Pope, and of Reynolds; Reynolds himself; Thomas Gray, when he allows the possibility of a mute inglorious Milton; and, in our own times, Thomas Carlyle—uphold that genius is but

mind of greater strength and larger growth than ordinary, carried hither or thither—to poetry, to philosophy, or to action—with a fair wind, and the tide of the age and a thousand chance currents, all more or less unknown and unknowable, but all under the eye and governance of that Almighty Wisdom which from the beginning foresees the end. Mind of such an order soon becomes alive to the powers with which it has been gifted; and fearlessly trusting in the same, shaking off, not indeed the guidance, but the yoke of authority, and going forward in its own indwelling strength, utters and fulfils itself in works quickened and bedewed with that freshness commonly called originality. We may therefore conclude, with Wordsworth, that among those qualities which go to form a poet "is nothing differing in kind from other men, but only in degree."

While the breadth, or in logical phrase the extension, of the definition should thus embrace all men, and not simply the well-starred few on whom have been bestowed, and justly bestowed, the most dazzling names, its depth or intension ought to reach from the very highest to the very lowest forms of poetry. We want not the knowledge of that which sometimes or even very often waits upon poetry as a kind of handmaiden, but the discovery of what is essential to poetic feeling, and that in all its stages, high, and low, and middling. It is remarkable that two of the world's greatest thinkers, Aristotle and Bacon, have defined poetry not in

itself, but by its accidents; the former laying stress on the fact that it is imitative and truthful, the latter on the fact that it is creative or feigned. And yet how thoroughly these are accidental is herein shown, that while Plato, in his Banquet, and by the mouth of Socrates himself reporting the words of an inspired prophetess, declares poetry to be a creation, nevertheless his grand objection to it in another work is, that it is but an imitation at third-hand. Circumstances equally accidental enter into other definitions. Were a man to explain anger by saying that it is a box on the ear, his description would be as good and of the same kind as many of the definitions of poetry. Simonides among the Greeks, for instance, and Darwin among ourselves, make poetry word-painting. Now, although word-painting be very often the means of awakening poetic feeling, it is no more essential to that end than a blow, far less a blow on any particular spot, is needed for anger; and as one man waxes wroth when another in the same strait is unmoved, so what is poetry to one mind is not to another. Therefore we are not to ask what are the things that give birth to poetic feeling, which would be as idle as to reckon up all the things that make one angry; but we have to determine that state or mood of the mind called poetic. The definition must put no school beyond its pale; it must ban neither the Greek, nor the Gothic, nor the Asiatic; it must open its arms to all poetries alike, dramatic, epic, lyrical;

and it must apply to every variety of poem, whether glowing with all the colours of Shakespere, or naked as from the hands of Crabbe. The unadorned works, indeed, of such a stern painter as Crabbe have been the rocks upon which many trim definitions have split; and witty and humorous pieces form another such reef. The wanderings and shortcomings of definitions are not wonderful, however; nor need we wonder at the ravings of those who, instead of defining, have been carried away into wild description. As Longinus thought to write sublimely on the sublime, as Addison wrote wittily about wit, as Horace, Vida, Boileau, Roscommon, Pope, and others have written poems on the poetic art, it is at present the fashion with some to indite a prose poem whenever the subject to be handled is poetry; quite forgetting that a poem without verse can be no more than the movement of a watch without the dial-plate. In the following sheets there will assuredly be no such highflying; but, as it is not so easy to sail clear of other errors, I dare only hope to be on the right track.

Before attempting to define, however, we must know precisely what it is that we are going to define. Poetry may be packed between the covers of a book, but we know that it had its being and home within the poet's bosom before he thus embodied it in words and gave it an outward dwelling-place on paper. He felt it, and then he spoke out in words of fire. Now, although we may

be unable to give such or any utterance to our feelings, we may be sure from reason beforehand, and are doubly sure from trial afterward, that the poet, as such, has no more, and no other, and not always even stronger feelings than ourselves; and that therefore what marks out the poet, commonly so called, is not simply loftier feelings or brighter visions, but power to give these forth, and to make others see what he has seen, and feel what he has felt. We may not have to boast of the accomplishment of verse; our muse may be Tacita, the silent one, beloved of Numa; but those feelings of the poet which precede expression are shared with us and with all men. This truth may be gathered partly from the very use of words. We speak of the romance of childhood, of a romantic adventure, of the poetry of life in general: thus also Keats, making mention of what is in plain English the rapture of a kiss, says that the lips *poesied* with each other. As heat is found in all bodies, poetry dwells with quickening power in every man's soul; but only here and there, not always, however, where it may be hottest, it breaks out into visible fire. Here, then, are two things instead of one to be defined; first, that frame of the mind wherein poetry is felt; next, that mood of mind wherein it is uttered—poetry, and the art of poetry. This distinction will henceforward be observed, at least, wherever there is need of accuracy; and I therefore beg leave to call the feeling *poetry*, and to call the expression of it in words *poesy*, or *song*. But

it will be seen that to answer what is commonly understood by the question, *What is poetry?* we have only to do with the former, namely, with the feeling of poetry, however it may have arisen, whether unaware and from the unknown depths of our own soul, or by reading the pages of a book, or by gazing on the broadside of nature; and that to answer the other question, or what is the state of the mind giving birth to song, belongs rather to the whole art of composition or utterance than to this one corner of it. For poetry is uttered in other ways than by speech; as in visible forms, in musical sounds, in dumb show; in any, or in all together.

Now, in entering upon the wide field that here stretches before us, we are met in the very gateway by the fact that both the dreamer and the thinker, the singer and the sayer, have declared the immediate aim of poesy to be pleasure. They are at war on many another point, but here they are at one. It is the pleasure of a truth, says Aristotle; it is that of a lie, says Bacon; but both feel and admit that, whatever other aims poesy may have in view, pleasure is the main thing. Whatsoever we do has happiness for its last end, but with poesy it is the first as well as the last. This is not all, however; the tie is much closer. Poesy is not only meant for pleasure, but is founded on pleasure, and is the embodiment of all our happiness, past, present, and to come. It is built on, and of, and in, and for happiness. "It is the record," as Shelley has it, "of the best and

happiest moments of the best and happiest minds." True, it often deals with sorrow, but none of our sorrows are without a ray of comfort; and as black in the sunshine appears brighter than white in the shade, so that oftentimes we cannot tell black from white, there is often a luxury in grief with which we would not part for anything short of the highest bliss. Some have gone so far as to say that the pleasure wrung from sorrow is the greatest of all; as Shelley, that it is "sweeter far than the pleasure of pleasure itself." Without going so far, Bishop Butler, in his sermon on Compassion, says, that we sympathize oftener and more readily with sorrow than with joy; and Adam Smith maintains that our sympathy with grief is generally a more lively sensation than our sympathy with joy. If these statements be true, they of course afford the very strongest reasons why poesy should deal with sorrow. But they may well be doubted; for it is a characteristic of pleasure, as will in due time be shown more fully, that we do not think of it, while, on the other side, we do think of our pains; we count every minute of woe, while years of happiness are unaware gliding over our heads; and we are thus very liable to make a false reckoning of the values of our pleasurable and painful feelings and fellow-feelings. Be they right or wrong, however, there is here at any rate no call for such extreme views: it is reason enough why poesy should treat of sorrow that we know so little of weal

except through woe—a fact so well understood that it has passed into proverbial wit, as when Erskine wrote to Lady Payne, "He never knew pleasure who never knew pain." Moreover, it always treats of a sorrow that can sing, and whenever the grief begins to harrow, it ceases to be fit for song.

Here, then, is the upshot of all, that poesy, on the one hand, is the record of pleasure, and, on the other, is intended to produce pleasure in the reader's mind. The poetic feeling, therefore, which has been thus recorded by the poet, and so produced in the reader, is pleasure. It is pleasure, but what kind of pleasure? This cannot be settled, and we cannot go a step farther, until we know somewhat the nature of enjoyment; and to this examination we now turn.

BOOK FIRST.

THE NATURE OF PLEASURE.

BOOK FIRST.

THE NATURE OF PLEASURE.

THERE is often so much pleasure in the midst of trouble that one is not seldom tempted to agree with the old philosopher who held that there is no such thing as pain. And in fact, without mocking our own distress, we might be infidel of pain, as men of science are infidel of cold. For even at the freezing point of carbonic acid gas, between which and freezing water there is a greater difference than between freezing water and boiling; even when he has thus attained the utmost degree of cold, the man of science must allow that there is not cold, but only a great exhaustion of heat, which, however, is not wholly exhausted. In like manner, there is an under-song of pleasure amid the wailing of sorrow; the fiercest pain is dashed with enjoyment; the remembrance of suffering is often a pleasure unalloyed.

But while our joys thus far outweigh and outnumber our sorrows, we seem to be little aware of it; and we seem to be better acquainted with the miseries than with the happiness of life. This is shadowed forth by

the fact, that in at least the English language the words to express what is good and pleasurable are fewer by a great deal than those for the bad and painful. We have colours to paint every shade of wickedness, and strokes for every stage of woe: let the crime be the blackest, we can give it a name; let the cup be the bitterest, we can tell of the very lees. But to tell of the varying lights of pleasure, and all the winning ways of goodness, we are wholly at a loss; and the most we can say of the greatest goodness is, that there is an unknown, indescribable charm about it; the most we can say of the highest bliss, that it is unutterable.

Whether this be owing to that vein of sadness which runs through the whole Saxon mind, or whether it be a difference traceable in all languages alike, we need not at present stay to inquire. It is enough to remark the failures that have always and everywhere been made in defining happiness. Very many who have defined it, like those who have defined poetry, tell not what is, but what gives happiness, or that short happiness called pleasure. Thus Helvetius wrote a poem showing that it lies in the cultivation of letters and the fine arts. Those, again, who have truly attempted a definition of the feeling itself, have often made it dark and loose, and always awanting. A good reason will afterwards be forthcoming why in our notions of happiness, as in those of poetry, we have ever been and still are to seek, and may never reach a perfect knowledge of all,

and especially of its higher, manifestations. Meanwhile must be given as full an explanation of it as lies in our power; and this I shall endeavour to do, overlooking entirely the outward circumstances favourable to it, health, wealth, and the like, which are so thoroughly accidental that—as Clement of Rome has well said—often the very abundance of those things which we hope and run after, becomes at once the fire and the fuel (*ὑπόθεσις καὶ ὕλη*) of all that we dread and shun. We must confine ourselves to inward and necessary conditions.

Pleasure, then, may be defined to be—*The harmonious and unconscious activity of the soul.* This definition recognises three great laws, which are to be considered in their order.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAW OF ACTIVITY.

In the first place, Enjoyment is an Activity. This is very clear, and is a very old doctrine. Aristotle, for instance, (N. Ethics, ix. 9, sec. 5) says that it is an energy—ἡ εὐδαιμονία ἐνέργειά τίς ἐστιν. In like manner, Hobbes makes it a *motion*, which indeed expresses our whole idea of activity. Dugald Stewart, however, in reckoning the various pleasures which go to make up happiness, while he gives Activity the first rank, places beside it the pleasures of sense, of imagination, of the understanding, and of the heart, as if in these there were no activity. It is quite evident that all these pleasures are but particular kinds of action.

But when action is said to be a law of pleasure, something more is meant than that all enjoyment is active; it is of course meant that the amount of enjoyment is measured by the degree of activity. The only happiness which seems to outlie the pale of this rule, is that of tranquillity, or rest. Rest, however, is very far from death, or stoppage, or listless ease; it is but the

lull of strife, hurry, toil, strain, and not only admits of the greatest activity, but is the very condition of its existence. As railway motion is not only easy, but quick; as an eagle goes sailing athwart the sun with the swiftness of wind, and yet calm as a slumberer; as this ball of earth is rolled through the skies with speed at the uttermost, and yet seems as wafted with the softness of a feather on the gentle breath of evening; as wide nature, however still she may appear, is stirring ever and everywhere around us with unimaginable power; so the mind, for all its hush, may be up and doing at once with the strength of a giant, and the nimbleness of a fairy. On the other hand, it may perchance be fast asleep or sluggish in its movements, but assuredly, in such a case, there is very little pleasure going.

It is, indeed, a very common mistake to oppose rest and action.

> "Some place the bliss in action, some in ease,"

are the words of Pope, as if action might not be full of ease. Young makes even a much wider separation between the two. He says,

> "Without employ,
> The soul is on a rack, the rack of rest,
> To souls most adverse; action all their joy."

Many also mistake the day of rest for a day of idleness; and in the same spirit, Hobbes, while he places the

felicity of this life in action, denies it repose, and declares that the joys of the next are to us upon earth utterly incomprehensible; he means, because they are said in Scripture to partake so much of rest. (Leviathan, § 11, compared with § 6.) This is in strange contrast with the very intelligible tortures which, for a heresy that he never held, and that is said to render the heretic worse than any devil, to wit, the denial of a God, John Bunyan, in his Vision of Hell, made the philosopher of Malmesbury not only undergo, but also most learnedly describe, the tortures of a fire quite unlike "culinary fire," as he calls it, putting into the mouth of a philosopher a phrase peculiarly acceptable to a tinker. Yet, perhaps, with Hobbes, it is rather a misuse of words than anything else; for, by "the repose of a mind satisfied," he afterwards explains himself to mean "desire at an end, sense and imagination at a stand." When he speaks of repose and tranquillity in this sense, we may fall in with what he says, but have a right to fall out with his language. Greatly should we wrong those sages who have placed happiness in the quiet of the mind, were we to understand them thus. Socrates had no such idea as the sophist supposed who charged him with placing happiness in the stillness of a stone: he but objected to that unsettled enjoyment which to him appeared nothing better than an itch. Even those—the Brahmins—who push the doctrine to the furthest extreme, making it the highest happiness to sit still and think of nothing, cannot be so

understood, inasmuch as the end which they propose is so far beyond our powers, that, in struggling to reach it, the utmost energies of the mightiest minds may be called forth in vain. And equally unwarrantable would it be to put such a meaning on the heavenly rest promised to all believers, and which is akin to that of God himself, who, rest how he may, never slumbereth, but *du sein du repos*, in the magnificent words of Buffon, from the bosom of repose, with a power unfailing as time, unbounded as space, and swifter than light, journeys ever on, by countless, invisible, arterial ways, to animate and sustain the innumerable constellations that in him alone live, and move, and have their being.

CHAPTER II.

THE LAW OF HARMONY.

THAT rest, therefore, wherein the highest enjoyment lies, is not inactivity nor stockstillness; it is only another name for the second law of pleasure, which is its Harmony.

By this harmony is understood not only agreement between certain faculties or capacities (Active or Passive Powers), and things fitted to supply their cravings, as between praise and the love of praise, water and thirst; but also such an enlarged agreement, bearing on every thing by which we are surrounded, great or small, far or near, as will reach even to the furthest end of our being, and forbid any the least pin-point of enjoyment which is not in perfect keeping with that end: a concord, not only simple and immediate, but manifold and remotely felt. Without the former concord, there can be no pleasure whatsoever: both together make up that lasting enjoyment which is called happiness.

Pleasure, says Aristotle, is a motion of the soul while it is still and at all points felt settling into its own na-

ture; (Rhetoric, i. 11, § 1) *κίνησις τις τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ κατάστασις ἀθρόα καὶ αἰσθητὴ εἰς τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν φύσιν* a certain motion of the soul, and a settlement of it, collective, continual, and sensible, into its proper nature; *ἀθρόα* having the double meaning of *collective* and *continuous*. In like manner, Jeremy Taylor says, that for man to become happy, "it is necessary that all his regular appetites should have an object appointed them, in the fruition of which felicity must consist. Because nothing is felicity, but when what was reasonably or orderly desired is possessed." Both concords are recognised by these writers. Other writers, although doubtless at heart they admit both, yet fall into a loose way of referring, some to the first alone, some only to the last. Of the former, Jeremy Collier may be taken as a specimen, when in one of his essays he lays it down that "pleasure of whatsoever kind is nothing but an agreement between the object and the faculty." Of the latter is Pope, when he sings,

"Virtue alone is happiness below."

Divisions of Pleasure into its various kinds are commonly furnished under the present head. As the present is not the primary law of pleasure, this at first may appear strange. But it is to be observed, that, as the nature of our activities must be determined by the objects with which they are engaged, so the nature of our pleasurable activities must be determined by the objects

with which they are engaged, and with which they harmonize. If pleasure, therefore, is to be divided, here is the proper place. It may be divided as follows:

All the objects of our thought are twofold, they are real, or they are ideal; they are either presented to the mind, that is, known immediately, or represented, that is, known mediately. There are two realities which man is permitted to behold, a spiritual and a material, God and nature; into the former of which he has insight by means of the higher reason or spirit, and into the latter through sense. As the ideal depends for its existence, so manifestly it must depend for its character, upon the thinking faculty; and as thought is evolved from two opposite poles, the one called Imagination, the other called Understanding, ideal objects, although they are often the self-same, yet, because they are viewed upon different sides, are divided into two classes, the one called images or representations, the other concepts or notions. Hence, in all, there are four kinds of pleasure, founded on the knowledge apprehended by Spirit, by Sense, by Imagination, and by Understanding. Those pleasures which under different names have charmed a Warton, a Rogers, and a Campbell, may be ranked under one or other of these heads: they, in fact, chiefly belong to those pleasures of Imagination which kindled the verse of Akenside.

It will be seen that while, in the above arrangement, spiritual pleasure has been added to the list of Stewart,

there has been taken away, not only the pleasures of activity (for reasons already given), but also, for a like cause, pleasures of the heart. The reason is plain. All pleasure is of the heart, is simply a feeling, emotion, or affection arising out of some head knowledge, to use a common phrase. Hobbes expresses this after his own fashion, in terms which, if metaphorically understood, will be regarded as forcible, but as ridiculous if taken too literally. Indeed, his materialistic views are in nothing seen to be more gross than in what he says touching the seat of pleasure and of passion generally. As he would have us believe that all our knowledges are only certain motions in the head, beginning from sense, so he wishes to make out that all our pleasures are only the same motions carried a step or two farther, namely, to the heart; and that as pleasures are nothing but motions helping the action of the heart (jucundum a juvando), so pain is but a motion hindering that action (tædium). He who is so glad if he can overturn any statement that galls him, by showing that it is expressed in a figure, he to whom Beatific Vision are words unintelligible, who objects to the word Spirit because it means breath, and laughs at Virtue inspired or infused, because that would mean Virtue inblown or inpoured, is yet so put upon, that to eke out a theory whose chief passport to success lies in the fact that it happens to be within reach of the most sensuous understanding, he wilfully hardens the metaphorical heart of common speech

into a real heart of flesh and blood. Were he to meet with such a statement in the pages of an opponent, and he had opponents not a few, how would he fasten on it, how would he chuckle! He would tell him in no mincing terms, that he had placed the seat of passion in the heart chiefly because he was writing in English; that had he been writing in Greek, he might have placed it in the liver; that had he been writing in Hebrew, he would have placed it in the belly; and that had he been writing in Chinese, he would have placed it there is no saying where.

To the laws of pleasure which we have hitherto considered, but chiefly to the second, it will be found that most of the elder writers confine themselves. This should be noted; because it is to the parallel laws of poetry that they have been tied. On the other hand, it will be found, that later authors have paid more attention to that which is the third, the last, and the highest law, alike of pleasure and of poetry.

CHAPTER III.

THE LAW OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS.

THE Third Law teaches that pleasure is unconscious; forgetting Self, and looking chiefly to the Unself.

We cannot waylay pleasure; we cannot hunt joy as we stalk for deer. Pleasure turns from the man that woos her, and to the heedless child flies unbidden. To ourselves she seldom gives note of her coming; she comes, like an angel, unheard, unseen, unknown, and not till she has gone or is parting from us, are our eyes opened to see what we have enjoyed. It was when the Saviour was vanishing from his disciples that they knew it was He; it was when the blissful vision on Tabor was passing away that Peter began to feel how good to be there. The moment we ask ourselves, Are we happy? we cease to be so. Thus it is that we can feel the present to be dull and weary; it would be as bright with sunshine as the past and the future, were we to take it as it is, and ask no questions. Thus also

would England now be as merry as old England, and the time being as good and happy as any that may yet be in store, not even excepting what Jeremy Collier has called, "the millenaal, paradisinical, earth." Pleasure says to every one of us what we say to children, Open your mouth, and shut your eyes.

This law has been expressed in manifold terms. Every lament said or sung of the fickleness of pleasure is an admission of the law. When Pope declares that "Man never is, but always to be, blest;" when, again, he describes happiness as that something "Which, still so near us, yet beyond us lies;" when Armstrong (in the Art of Preserving Health, a poem, by this time of day, well-nigh forgotten) describes it as a coy goddess who "Invites us still, and shifts as we pursue;" when Barry Cornwall upbraids it as "The gay to-morrow of the mind which never comes;" all these are but ways of expressing two things, that pleasure consists in giving chase, and that the object of pleasure is never present, but always out of ourselves. Chiefly to this, although partly to the first law, belongs that overflow, that enlargement of heart (πλατυσμός) to which Christian writers so often refer, sometimes speaking of it simply as glorious liberty, at other times, and with equal truth, regarding it as the very essence of joy. And that word which denotes the very highest pitch of enjoyment, to wit, *ecstasy*, comes to the same thing; for, in the Greek, it means *transport*, an *outstanding*,

ἔκστασις.* Likewise the great truth, so often repeated, that love is happiness, and the more of the one the more of the other, when put into formal language means, that happiness is an outgoing of the soul, and the farther out the more happiness. The more hopelessly we are in love with nature, the more heartily we enter into the joys and sorrows of our kindred, or, better still, the more entirely we give ourselves up to the worship and (are we not allowed to call it?) the fellowship of the Almighty Father; in a word, the more self is forgotten, and the mind sent abroad, for us the happiness is higher. So that the nearer we approach self-annihilation, the happier do we become; and if such a state were only possible, it would be the happiest of all. It is only possible, however, in death, or, perhaps, in a swoon; and thus it is that we hear persons who have been entranced and filled to overflowing with unutterable bliss, tell that they could have died, and were ready to melt away.

These remarks are fully borne out by all the accounts that have reached us of persons in a state of high enjoyment; and among others are well illustrated by the behaviour of those disciples to whom was given a foretaste of heaven on the Mount of Transfiguration. The

* To be distinguished, however, from Aristotle's definition of pain as an ἔκστασις, where a very different metaphor is intended. For he has before him the idea of something *out of place*, and uses the word in opposition to κατάστασις, as above cited (p. 23.) As pleasure is a κατάστασις, or settlement, so pain is an ἔκστασις or unsettlement.

bliss was too strong for them, and so blinded their souls that they were overpowered with sleep. When they had somewhat recovered, they were so bewildered, that of Peter it is told—he knew neither what to say, nor what he said: indeed, what he could have meant by proposing to build three booths it is hard to understand. In like manner, when Saint Paul was caught up into the third heaven, he knew not whether he were dead or alive, in the body or out of the body; and so far also might credit be given to the legends of Ignatius Loyola, and other Romish saints, if, without bringing forward the witness of other men, it were simply related, that in the warmth of their devotions, these worthies felt as if lifted from the ground. Perfect joy will not keep house with perfect knowledge. In so far as we become self-conscious, there is no room for joy; and on the other hand, as Hooker finely brings out (Eccles. Pol. v. 67), "the mind, feeling present joy, is always marvellous unwilling to admit any other cogitation, and in that case casteth off those disputes whereunto the intellectual part at other times easily draweth. A manifest effect whereof may be noted if we compare with our Lord's disciples in the twentieth of John, the people that are said in the sixth of John to have gone after him to Capernaum. These leaving him on the one side of the sea of Tiberias, and finding him again, as soon as themselves by ship were arrived, on the contrary side, whither they knew that by ship he came not, and by land the

journey was longer than according to the time he could have to travel, as they wondered, so they asked also, *Rabbi, when camest thou hither?* The disciples, when Christ appeared unto them in far more strange and miraculous manner, moved no question, but rejoiced greatly in what they saw. For why? The one sort beheld in Christ only that which they knew was more than natural, but yet their affection was not rapt therewith through any great extraordinary gladness; the other when they looked on Christ were not ignorant that they saw the well-spring of their own felicity: the one, because they enjoyed not, disputed; the other disputed not, because they enjoyed."

Turning now to view the opposite state of mind, wherein self-consciousness bears sway, it will be found that nature has pronounced woe upon him who will brood over his own self. Eat not thy heart, was the advice of Pythagoras long before Christianity came to teach and to train us in the same doctrine: and all who partake of such food have been represented by Bacon as very cannibals—the cannibals of their own hearts. Which they truly are, who, among Christians, give so much heed to self-examination—ransacking every motive in search of lurking evil, and raking up their hearts for a good sign—that they lose all peace of mind, and at length are willing to wrest the words of the Apostle to suit their own feeling, that true believers are in this world "of all men the most miserable." This kind of

self-consciousness, Milton has described as "treading the constant round of certain doctrinal heads, attended with their *uses, motives, marks, and means.*" It took strong hold of the Puritans, and still clings to their followers; but it was not entirely confined to them. We may conceive how widely it must have spread when even Jeremy Taylor, the most poetical of divines, yielded to its influence, and how deeply in his nature the cancer must have been rooted, when in his book of Holy Living he could gravely set himself to give somewhere about eight tokens for a man to know whether he had been drunken or not. Equally self-conscious, too, is that kind of self-denial in favour with the ascetics, who sternly determine to gainsay nature, think what they please, and believe what they think; as when George Herbert, in a couplet, which is crippled most likely from having to keep pace with the sense, tells us to

> "Look at meat, think it dirt, then eat a bit,
> And say withal, Earth to earth I do commit."

The Christian religion is a gladsome religion—a gospel; and greatly must it have been misunderstood ere any of its followers could have been brought into such woe-begone plight. Truth they undoubtedly have seized, but only in part—the sour side of the peach.

These are examples of extreme self-consciousness displayed in man's spiritual nature. As displayed in his intellectual nature, a like tale must be told. Thought,

indeed, is ever painful; not contemplative, but analytic or reflective thought; and the thinker would never go on, but for the delight he has in looking forward to some discovery, and in thereafter unbending. The labour of ploughing up the soil of the mind is only undertaken in view of the coming harvest. Dr Thomas Brown mentions it as one great advantage in the study of pure philosophy, that no instruments are needed, no plough, no reaping, no thrashing, no winnowing machine. The astronomer has to get his telescope, the physiologist his microscope, the chemist his retorts, his furnaces, and his batteries; but the philosopher has ways and means all within himself. If this be a great advantage, it has also its attendant evils. The mind by itself has to work upon itself, and this may be carried so far as to end in slavery the most insufferable. The self-espionage established more or less in every philosophic mind may gain such head as to force its way even into those words and deeds which are never well unless they are the unconscious outbreak of natural feeling: it will then grow into a tyranny which gathers the more strength the more you become aware of its presence—a disease, the very knowledge of which is the disease itself. Yet, on the other hand, while we can truly call this extreme self-consciousness a disease, it should be observed that the mind may be unbalanced by having too little, madness often being nothing else; and that we are never to speak of the philosopher—not

even of the sceptical philosopher—without respect and gratitude. The people of Pegu worship all who may have been destroyed by apes, and it is but a little thing for us to stand in awe of those who have fallen amongst false alarms, who have been torn in pieces by their own shadows, who have been devoured by the doubts and misgivings of the most destructive Pyrrhonism.

Between man's religious and his philosophic life, lies a broad field open to the same influences. Shakspere knew it well, and knew that they were blighting influences, when he made Edward, afterwards King Edward IV., complain, on the death of his father, Richard Plantagenet, that his "soul's palace was become a prison," and then add, that "never henceforth should he joy again." There can be no enjoyment while we are thus shut up within ourselves. It is the height of Manfred's woe that he cannot forget himself even in sleep:

> "My slumbers, if I slumber, are not sleep,
> But a continuance of enduring thought,
> Which then I can resist not: in my heart
> There is a vigil, and these eyes but close
> To look within."

The dreadfullest part of that most dreadful suffering which awaits the wicked, and which has been likened to unquenchable fire, and to a worm undying, will be the gnawings of a conscience that will not let them escape from themselves. To get rid of themselves will be utterly impossible, since the very causes which blast

their hopes and their happiness must weaken sadly those powers by which here and now a strong-minded man—such as Samuel Johnson, or Robert Hall—throwing his whole energies into some channel that leads away from self, is often seen to shake off and overcome pain, and have positive enjoyment. And the bad passions, which are not only unlovely in themselves, but also make us dislike those in whose bosoms they have a den, hatred, ill-will, envy, jealousy, are as full as, on the contrary, that love which never faileth, which is not easily provoked, which vaunteth not itself, and which thinketh no evil, is empty of self-consciousness. As love is happiness, because it is an outgush of the soul, so hatred is misery, because it is a falling back upon self. There are many degrees of hatred, therefore many degrees of wretchedness. In anger, which is a sudden and unreflecting hatred, there is often a very high degree of pleasure; but sinking to the other end of the scale, to malice and envy, where the mind is coiled within itself, like a snake in its hole, the racking must be fearful; and what commonly goes by the name of hatred, lying in the midway, while it is sometimes not without zest, is far oftener brimful of bitterness.

These are random illustrations; but they may serve to place the law in a clearer light, showing the self-consciousness of pain, the unconsciousness of pleasure. Against all that has been advanced, however, it may be replied, that in the consciousness of *having*, under the

three forms of being, of having, and of doing good, commonly called the consciousness of existence, the sense of power, and self-approbation, we feel delight; and that therefore, since the rule does not hold in every case, it must fall to the ground.

Now, the joy said to be felt in the consciousness of existence does not at all clash with the present law. For it is not, properly speaking, in the consciousness of our own existence that we rejoice, but in the knowledge, sudden, and new, or at least, for the time, unwontedly clear, of those goods which belong to us because we are, and because we are in a certain state, say in a state of release from prison, or from any other bondage. The man who rises from the bed of sickness, rejoices not in existence, nor in health, the new mode of existence, but as he rejoices in that fellowship with his brother-man and with boon nature, to which it has made him free. To rejoice in life is to rejoice in the benefits of life; it is to delight not in a bank of money, but in money's worth; not in that which is within, but in that which is without. Wordsworth, it will be remembered, in describing a shepherd whose heart was ever among the mountains, tells that in them he found the pleasure of life itself:

> "Those fields, those hills—had laid
> Strong hold on his affections, were to him
> A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
> The pleasure which there is in life itself."

In an earlier edition of the same poem, he explains himself thus :

> "These fields, these hills,
> Which were his living Being, even more
> Than his own blood."

Neither, when we are said to rejoice in the sense of power, is there any thing at odds with the present law. For we cannot feel power without calling it into exercise, and the very act of doing so carries the mind away from self.

Nor yet is the joy of self-approval or peace of conscience at variance with it, as might very easily be shown by a reference to that fellow-feeling which is so deeply seated in our nature, and which Adam Smith, as the groundwork of his whole theory of Moral Sentiments, has laid out with such wonderful power and beauty. But it ought never to be forgotten, which too often it is, that one of the great ends of our most holy religion (herein showing itself the religion of happiness) is to do away with conscience altogether, by renewing our nature, and raising it to a higher platform. Conscience can belong only to a fallen being; it is the jurymast of a wreck, mast and rigging being borrowed from all parts of the vessel; and Christianity aims at taking away all motives, rules and outward guides, or rather the need of such, by giving us instead a nature or inward bent, so that, while living according to the law,

we may be dead to it, knowing perhaps, but seldom thinking, never feeling that it binds and bounds us, because we never struggle with our bonds, nor try to overstep our bounds.

These illustrations might be greatly extended, and in that case they would show still further that wherever there is pleasure—no matter for its kind—the mind is thrown into the objective; and that there is the greatest pleasure where the mind is most drawn out of itself. Taken together with the former remarks, they make the definition of pleasure to be, *The harmonious and unconscious activity of the soul;* a definition which gives the reason, already hinted, of the difficulty, one may almost say impossibility, of fathoming the deeper parts of bliss. In full self-consciousness we can never get beyond the shallows; the tide of feeling is far out, and there is nothing to be sounded; so that when men complain of their delights being evanescent, and their griefs permanent,

> "Our sweet is mixt with bitter gall,
> Our pleasure is but pain,
> Our joys not last the looking on,
> Our sorrows aye remain,"

they say what is literally true, while at the same time there is no ground of complaint. Eurydice, our greatest joy, goes back to hell if, Orpheus-like, we dare turn to look at her; and all our joys are somewhat like those

little creatures that, whenever they are watched, roll themselves into a ball and pretend to be dead. Because of its unconsciousness, therefore, bliss may be felt, but must needs pass understanding; since whatever dwells on the uttermost borders of self-consciousness will be as wild, wandering and unruly as borderers generally are, and whatever ranges beyond its eyeshot, must have crossed the bourne of knowledge altogether.

It may be worth while, before quitting the subject, to point out the fulness of the foregoing definition. The whole of it is folded up in the one word Activity. For as mind only is active, and every thing else passive, when we speak of activity, we must needs mean activity of the mind. And seeing there can be no activity without at least some agreement with the powers and order of nature, and the highest activity implies the fullest agreement therewith, we cannot think of it unless its Harmony be more or less entire. Lastly, inasmuch as self-consciousness when continued is painful, when continued long becomes a disease, and the more natural and healthy state of the mind is to be self-forgetful, it is but a part of the harmony or order of our activities that they should be in a great measure Unconscious. Thus the three laws of pleasure, as found in man, are enfolded in the one law of Activity; the second being begotten of the first, and the third flowing from them both. On this understanding the definition may pass. But it must be remembered that while the

above is the order (not of the time in which the laws of human pleasure arise, since they are coeval, but) of their dependence upon each other, very differently do they rank in point of importance. For, to give a concrete example, as Hope, Faith, and Love are the springs of all our joy, Hope the beginning, Love the end, and yet Hope the least, Love the chiefest of all; so of the same in more general phrase, the activity, rest and outgoing of the soul, the first is last, and the last first.

BOOK SECOND.

THE NATURE OF POETRY.

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HERE again comes the old salutation, What is Poetry? Most persons think they know what it is well enough, but, if they try, they will find that they know it no better than Augustine knew Time: If you ask me, he says, what Time is, I cannot tell; but I know very well if you do not ask me. As though some wicked sphinx were the questioner, no sooner are we asked what poetry is than all poetry has fled, and is seen like the mirage far away behind us and before. I am in hopes that in treading this wilderness, the foregoing remarks will afford a clue, so that we may find our way to something like a sure and definite answer. Let it only be remembered that by poetry is meant poetic feeling, however it may have been awakened, whether at first-hand by contact with nature, or at second-hand by converse with a poet; and further let it be granted that, although we have only to do with the nature of inward feelings, we are allowed to discover these by referring to their

objective expression in poesy. What kind of pleasure, then, is poetry?

It strikes one at a glance that it is pleasure of a very high order: of all mere earthly pleasures it is indeed the highest. There is, however, a more heavenly happiness. It hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive of bliss loftier than that ecstasy which fills the mind of the worshipper when in visionary hour he holds fellowship with God on high. Although this, our greatest joy, be not of needs poetic, we may still venture to say here what I shall afterwards endeavour to prove, that it is almost always attended by those activities which entitle it to the name of poetry. Its noblest title is that which it receives by charter of inspiration—Joy of the Holy Ghost; but it does not scorn the meaner title, and this title it shares with the very lowest of our pleasures. In days of chivalry, a king was not born a knight any more than a squire was: they had both to win their spurs. In like manner, neither the most spiritual nor the most sensuous pleasure is of itself poetry, but any and every pleasure may become so. Poetry has thus a very wide range: it embraces every pleasure of which man is capable, and gives it a peculiar tone; a tone with regard to which it will ever hold good, that of two minds enjoying the same thing, the one in poetic, the other in unpoetic mood, the former has a pleasure more refined, keener, better far than that which is felt by the latter.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAW OF IMAGINATION.

BUT by the question, What kind of pleasure is poetry? we are at once launched into a consideration of the first law. For, as was remarked in closing the analysis of pleasure, the third law slides into the second, and both slide into the first, like the pieces of a telescope; so that to ask what kind of pleasure this or that may be, is simply to ask what may be the kind of its activity. In the present case, Shakspere will answer:

> "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact."

He speaks of three individuals having the same build; but there is not that difference between them which would enable us logically to divide them into three. They might all very well exist in one and the same person, like those three suns which Edward and Richard saw rise on the plain near Mortimer's Cross, and which were immediately afterwards resolved into one. As one and the same goddess was called Luna in heaven,

Diana on earth, and Hecate in the shades below, so one and the same man is loftily hailed a poet, is called in commonplace a lover, and is damned by the name of a lunatic.

But it is not necessary to prove that imagination is the kind of activity belonging to poetry: the fact is unquestioned. By imagination Stewart and some others understand the faculty which looks to the possible but unknown—as a hippogriff—what the schools called beings of reason, *entia rationis;* and the mirror of the real they have called, in defiance of philosophic usage, conception. Imagination is in these pages employed with the double meaning—as the faculty which represents every show possible to sense, the productive and the reproductive Logos.

Although warmth of imagination is the mark by which poetry has ever and everywhere been distinguished from other pleasure, an objection to this doctrine very naturally arises; and we ought to determine precisely how we are to understand it. Imagination either enters into or plays about every word that we utter, and almost every thought that we think. The shows of the sensuous world fall upon the mind, like oil dropt upon water, to spread a film of glorious colouring on the surface of every thought and every feeling. It may therefore be objected that imagination belongs in no especial manner to poetic apart from other pleasure; and that the only difference in this respect is one of

degree. Imagination mingles with every pleasure, but the largest share goes to poetry. This is true; but it is not the less true that a difference of degree will often in a certain sense constitute a difference of kind. Add a little warmth and ice will become water; a little more heat will turn the water into steam. Thus will a mere increase of imagination thaw the most stubborn reason, melt the hardest prose, and make it flow forth in song; and thus, too, might we speak of genius as different from talent. There is, of course, no authoritative means of ascertaining—by measure, by weight or by tale—the exact amount of imagination that renders pleasure poetic: each mind, each country, as every atmosphere, every climate, has a standard of its own. And every pleasure, too, has a degree of its own at which it becomes poetry, just as ice, glass, and iron have each a degree at which they melt. Not to carry the comparison further, I will only add, that as some things in nature are always found fluid, so certain moods of the mind, such as love and feeling generally, contain so much imagination as to be almost always poetic. Love, whatever its kind, is the staple of our daily and homebred poetry. For as the opposite affections are owing to a want of faith, so love bursts from the fulness of faith, and faith itself is the ripe fruit of a strong and full-blown imagination—hope.

Imagination is the most stirring faculty that we have. Hobbes but a very little overshoots the mark when he

declares that it is the source of all other activity, "the first internal beginner of voluntary motion." His remark would be absolutely true, were it not for those instances in which it originates action only as the occasional cause, and as the sun may be said to cause the business of the day. While imagination is actually our dominant faculty, it is potentially second to a higher—that of spirit or the pure reason; to which it stands in nearly the same relation that a grand vizier bears to a sultan. It wields the influence which rightfully belongs to the higher power, and which the higher power is in our present condition too weak or too sluggish to wield for itself. Between that power and our lower powers, between spirit and our senses, it stands as a minister between the crown and the commons; and according as it advances the interests of the one or of the other, its influence is good or bad. Shelley has said that imagination is the great instrument of good: he ought to have added that it is also the great instrument of evil. Being the interpreter between sense and spirit, it can either spiritualize the former, or sensualize the latter. It will always raise mere sense above itself, and so far well; but, on the other hand, it may degrade spirit, not indeed by the simple fact of giving it a sensuous expression, for it must do so, yet by giving an expression so grossly sensuous that the spiritual meaning is overlaid, if a sensual is not also added. There is undoubtedly danger of this: in its own place, however,

imagination will always be an helpmeet to that noblest faculty by which we behold spiritual truth; it will give a support that is thankfully received. As we are not satisfied with the heat of a stove, but like to see the face of the fire—a sight that although it cannot make us warmer, will give a livelier sensation of warmth, even so without having power of itself to increase our spiritual knowledge, imagination is able and always endeavours to render it more plain and palpable.

Our knowledge of imagination and of its workings, must depend upon our knowledge of its objects. The faculty and its object are correlatives, each unintelligible, each impossible, without the other. We are therefore driven on to the second law of poetry, the law of harmony.

Before turning to this, however, a few words will not here be misplaced in reference to a question very important as touching the history of art. At what age is the imagination in fullest bloom? In the youth both of men and of races, it is commonly said, whereas there seems to be good ground for the doubt expressed by Samuel Johnson, Dugald Stewart and others, with regard to this wide-spread notion. The notion, indeed, is not founded on facts, but rather on the want of facts. For all the masterpieces of art, so far as known to us, have been the offspring of an age far removed from infancy, as was the age of Homer, the age of Pericles, the Augustan era, that of Al Mamoun among the Arabians,

that of Dante in Italy, of Chaucer in England, the date of Leo X., the Elizabethan period in England, the same period in Spain, the time of Louis XIV., and, not to descend later, the days of Queen Anne. Whence, then, has risen the idea? It has arisen in the first place from observing that imagination is by far the powerfullest faculty of youth, that at a more advanced stage it is not relatively so much more powerful than the other faculties, and thence leaping to the conclusion that in the interval it has been weakened. It has really been strengthened, but the other faculties have been strengthened much more, so that there is not the same disproportion as formerly. It has also arisen from finding that the most perfect kind of poesy, the lyrical, begins to flourish earliest, and supposing that to begin with the highest kind is a proof of the highest poetical gift. From which it would follow that the famed Provençal minstrels, who have not left behind them a single great name, are to be placed above him who is supreme in the lower sphere of the drama.

CHAPTER II.

THE LAW OF HARMONY.

THUS far have we arrived in the analysis—that as all pleasure is a concord produced while the mind is in a state of activity, so poetic pleasure is a concord produced while that activity is charged more or less with imagination. The concord therefore will be intensified, imagination having that power. It is the grand harmonist of life; it is the interpreter and peacemaker between mind and matter; it supplies the connecting links between thought and thought; it enters largely into the composition of faith, and, cemented by faith, it forms the pillars and the arches of society. Harmony is its chief end.

Such a concord is of two kinds: it may be imaginary, or it may be only imaginative. An imaginary concord is an agreement between Self and a mental representation of objective reality, as Yarrow yet unvisited was to the mind of Wordsworth. The concord is simply imaginative when our nature harmonizes with reality

itself, something being added, and perhaps also something cancelled by imagination, as when Wordsworth for a summer month gazed upon the sea by Peele Castle, and beheld upon it "the light that never was on sea or land." Imagination enters wholly into the former, into the latter only in part.

Neither of these should be overlooked, and from the stand-point of the poet himself we shall see both. Bacon, however, in his celebrated definition, has taken account only of the former, and indeed from his peculiar point of view, the latter could hardly be seen. Appearing simply as a reader of poesy, and asking himself what he there found, he said that it is a concord wholly imaginary—"a creation, submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind." But those thoughts and feelings which are second-hand, which are wholly representative, which are imaginary, to us who get them by reading, are original in the poet's mind, and spring from contact with reality. Nothing need here be said of the former, the imaginary concord, as it is largely illustrated in the common psychological text-books: we turn to that imaginative agreement wherein the mind is face to face with reality, and the imagination appears only as an helpmeet.

There are two realities with which man is privileged to hold communion, a spiritual and a sensuous, God and Nature. By widely different powers do we behold these realities: the spirit has no eye for the natural,

and mere sense cannot see the divine. The two powers, however, are connected, and the realities which they regard are bridged by the imagination. Imagination is the ladder reaching from earth to heaven, a musical ladder from sense to spirit.

But while imagination is a fellow-worker both with spirit and with sense, it must evidently have a different manner of working with each. God is always far more than we can think of, whereas Nature does not always come up to our wish. If, therefore, on the one hand, it has to raise nature, on the other, it must rise to God. Bacon says, that while the imagination is employed in adapting the shows of things to the heart's desire, it is the part of reason to buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things. But this is only true for the things of sense: the province of the imagination in spiritual things is to buckle and bow the mind to embrace these as they are. It has thus always a twofold work to accomplish—a subjective as well as an objective raising; in the one case, exalting the realities of sense to our human ideal; in the other, elevating our human thought to a mount from which, as from Carmel and Pisgah, or on which, as on Horeb, Sinai and Tabor, spiritual realities may be witnessed.

If this judgment be well grounded, it will enable us to see the one-sidedness and utter weakness of Johnson's daring assertion, that there can be no religious

poesy; a statement put so plausibly that such men as Christopher North, John Keble, and James Montgomery have thought it worth their while to sift it in detail, and almost word by word; and which, often as it has been thus called in question, has not often been fairly rebutted. Johnson carries all before him, if you but admit that his definition of poetry (the same as that of Bacon) is sufficiently broad; if you admit that poesy always pleases "by exhibiting an idea more grateful to the mind than things themselves afford." The essential part of this definition says, that in poesy a grateful ideal is presented to the mind; it is unessential whether that ideal be more or less than reality. In saying that it must always be more, Johnson begs the whole question; and if this be granted, all is lost; for truly Omnipotence cannot be exalted, Infinity cannot be amplified, Perfection cannot be improved. Reply, however, that religious poesy seeks not to heighten the Divine, but to raise our minds to the perception of the Divine, and he in turn is foiled. His theory is thus at fault *à priori;* and *à posteriori* it fares no better. For although it be most true that pure spirit can easily as a sunbeam soar to altitudes which, from want of buoyant air, the wings of imagination can never approach, yet whenever it ventures to employ language (and Johnson would most assuredly not allow that worship ceases to be spiritual when it ceases to be silent) it must evidently have descended into that cloudy region which

belongs to imagination even more than to itself; and there, what wonder if the shiny visions of spirit, and the lark-like music of fancy, cross, blend and thrill through each other, as living warp and woof. A distinction however must be noticed between the poetry of heathen worship and that of Christian, since according as our ideal happens to be above or below reality, the work of imagination will be more or less essential. With heathen poets the imagination runs riot and enters the soul of the most spiritual conceptions; for with the most intense anthropomorphism they adapted the nature of their gods to their own desires. The Christian poets endeavour to reach an uncreated God and allow imagination go with them only to the door.

SENSUOUS concords—which we must run over very rapidly—may be classed under the five senses. Some philosophers would make six, seven, and even eight senses; but the common reckoning is the most trustworthy.

Of all our senses, hearing seems to be the most poetical; and because it requires most imagination. We do not simply listen to sounds, but whether they be articulate or inarticulate, we are constantly translating them into the language of sight, with which we are better acquainted; and this is a work of the imaginative faculty.

Of seeing, it is nothing beyond a truism to observe

that the mere view of any one thing, however agreeable to the eye, is not poetical. Beauty is never a unit; it is plural. (Compare Book III., Part I., Chap. I.) Apart from the associations which belong to them, the sight of a cloudless sky, of a waveless sea, of a green grass plot, does not make poetry. But let any of these be combined with other objects—a sky with clouds or stars, a sea with ships or porpoises, a grass-plot with daisies or buttercups; and there is a vision before you which, without help of imagination, you cannot look at so as truly to see it, that is, so as to be able afterwards to picture it before your mind's eye. You cannot behold two things together and recognise them as joined, without imagination; and it is for this reason, that, with all their staring, many see so little. If not one nor two, but dozens and scores of things are mingled together in one picture, as they mostly are, it is not difficult to understand how any gazer whose glance will take them all in, or so much as a tithe, is beholden to imagination even more than to sense. So that the mere survey of anything, especially anything beautiful, whose outline is filled with details not a few, is an act which requires so much imagination as will of itself almost suffice to raise that act to the rank of poetry. And when it is furthermore remembered that the exercise of imagination in one way will be followed by its exercise in many other ways, and must in this instance give motion, by the known laws

of association, to innumerable trains of thought, all beginning in the present show, and connecting it with the past, with the absent and with the future, it will readily be acknowledged that the act must needs be poetical. No man can really behold a landscape, so that, when he turns away, it shall hang like a picture in his mind, and he could sketch it, if he had the art of pencilling, but the mood of his mind so engaged is entitled to the name of poetry.

Smell, however agreeable, is not of itself poetical, but along with other sensations, as the sight of whence it comes, it approaches poetry. And it may be put generally, that any two or more blending sensations enliven and ennoble each other; the sight and hearing of a waterfall, the sight and smell of a rose, the sight and feeling of fire, the sight, taste, and flavour of a pine-apple. It is not simply that two pleasures are better than one, but that to encompass both in one act of the mind requires a more perfect, above all, a more active, faculty than mere sense.

Taste is more liable than any other sense to run into grossness, and we take great pains to avoid this. Every boy knows the bad policy of slipping his sugar plums one by one from his pocket into his mouth as fast as he can munch them; and very seldom will he do so, unless from sheer satiety. He understands right well that his pleasure will be heightened in kind as well as strengthened in degree, if he treat his eyes along with his pa-

late, and stop sometimes to think of the dainty before him. All children have this scientific way of eating, when they eat for enjoyment. And so at the festive board, we attempt by the embellishment of the table, by the witchery of music, and, above all, by the fountains of conversation, to raise the entertainment from that of a mere feed up to a banquet whereof a poet might partake, and which might not be unworthy of his song.

Under the name of touch is comprehended a number of impressions which differ from each other more widely than do the varieties of any other sense; yet few of them blossom into poetry, and still fewer bear the fruits of poesy. Perhaps the reason is not that they are of a grovelling nature, but that, from their being so customary, we pay little attention to them. And if so, we are bound in all modesty not to deny that those who do cultivate the sensations may find them poetical. Scratching the head is a notable way of getting ideas together, and Sir John Suckling seems to have regarded it as not unpoetical; for in his Aglaura, a play which, although it begins in meanness and confusion like a root underground, yet ends in a brilliant flower, he makes not only a lord of the council, but even a prince of the blood perform the operation when feeling at a loss. And have you never read that John Philips, the poet, when at school, would, instead of playing with the other boys, retire to his chamber, and there enjoy what to

him was the sovereign pleasure of sitting hour by hour while his hair was combed for him! Of the fine perceptions of that Eastern princess, who, for three hard lumps, raised by three small peas placed underneath the countless layers of feather and down on which she reclined, was utterly unable to sleep, thereby proving her royalty, who will say that they were unfitted to afford her noble pleasure? And who knows but the happiness of the Hindoo dying with a cowtail in his hand may be sublime as hers who breathes her last in a kiss? About such things we must not dispute—the rather, since, of the five palaces built by Vathek to the five senses, that raised to the sense of touch was called the Dangerous. This at least may readily be granted, that a great part of the exhilarating pleasures derived from animal exercise, swimming, riding, running, leaping, and the rest, are contributed by the sense of touch.

Although in the definition of poetry put forth by Bacon and endorsed by Johnson, they deny that those spiritual, and overlook that those other enjoyments which we have been considering, belong to the domain of the poetic; it is right, before leaving this subject, to add that the language of Bacon on this head, as on many another, is sometimes so framed as to stretch like india-rubber, and take in more than he seems to have intended; and that, while Johnson's opinion, as formally expressed in the life of Waller, is thus narrow, and a good illustration of his own oracle, (would it were

not always a true oracle) that to circumscribe poetry by a definition will only show the narrowness of the definer, he has not only in other places given glimpses of a more extended theory, but in one remarkable passage, occurring in the life of Milton, has gone the length of stating with his unfailing downrightness, and so broadly as to shame all other attempts of the kind, that whatever pleasure finds a welcome in every bosom must needs be poetic: "that cannot be unpoetic with which all are pleased."

CHAPTER III.

THE LAW OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS.

MENTION is made in certain histories of a piece of music composed by Al Farabi (the philosopher who spoke seventy languages), and played before Seifeddoula, Sultan of Syria, the first movement of which threw the prince and his courtiers into fits of laughter (mere imaginative activity); the next melted all into tears (the sense of incongruity vanishing, and sympathy or harmony taking its place); while the last, grandest of all, lulled even the performers to sleep. The story may be taken as an allegory showing that the nobler activities of the mind require the unconsciousness not only of those in whom they are awakened, but also of the awakeners. With the unconsciousness of the artists we have nothing at present to do: that is a subject belonging properly to the theory of poesy. Here we are to treat of unconsciousness as the last and highest law of poetry.

To satisfy the ghost of Locke, let the question be waved, whether in very sound sleep the imagination or any other part of the mind is at work. It will,

however, be generally allowed, that in slumber it accomplishes its most astonishing feats, and that this can be said of no other faculty, unless of spirit, whose unconsciousness—the unconsciousness of the entranced seer, is still deeper. This unconsciousness, in the midst of which, and according as it becomes greater, the imagination revels with greater and greater freedom, is the crowning bliss—the native element, of poetry.

We might arrive at the same conclusion by another route. It must be evident that there are but three possible states of the mind, the poetic, the unpoetic or prosaic, and the antipoetic or philosophic. (The prosaic might also be called the unphilosophic.) 'Prosing cannot be the antipode of poetry, as is sometimes supposed, any more than is indifference the opposite of love; but is that dull, vacant state of the mind, when it has no eye for beauty, and no ear for truth. Philosophy and poetry, however, are true opposites; every active mind being always engaged either in philosophizing or in poetizing, according to its power. And wherein do philosophy and poetry stand opposed? They may be regarded, each as the work of the whole mind, but evolved from opposite poles. The mind, when philosophizing, dwells in the subjective or self; when poetizing, it is thrown into the objective or unself; as a consequence of which it is self-conscious in the one case, in the other self-forgetting. Very much, indeed, of what people study under the name of science or of philosophy ought

not so to be termed; for the science really is what Coleridge, with his never-failing happiness, has called "a fairy tale of nature," and the philosophy, not being reflective but contemplative, is called most truly poetic philosophy. Poetry, says Longinus, always brings us to an ecstacy (ἔκστασις)—an outgoing or outstanding. In this broad sense it may be said of every man in his station that he is either a poet or a philosopher. Iago is too self-conscious for a poet; he is one of those philosophers called men of the world, a thoroughly selfish sharper, who declares that in following the Moor, he follows but himself. On the other hand, look at Othello. Othello, the hero and the lover, is a poet—entirely under the rule of dreams, and who so far forgets himself as to destroy the very being where (in his own language) he had garnered up his heart. The life of such a one, as Campbell said of Sir Philip Sidney, is poetry done into action; and still more forcibly has this been expressed by Ben Jonson, who, remarkably happy as he was in his epitaphs, both those which he gave and that which he got, perhaps never wrote a finer one than the following on his son, which indeed would be perfect but for *peace* and *piece*, one sound with two meanings.

> "Rest in soft peace, and, askt, say here doth lye
> Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry."

A child is the very personification of poetry, it is so unconscious.

The unconsciousness of poetic feeling will further be manifest, if it can be shown that self-consciousness in any form is hurtful to poesy. This will not be difficult. There are three forms in which self-consciousness is most liable to be intruded into a poem, namely, as didactic, as artistic, and as satiric; and none of these can be admitted into a poem without doing much harm.

Take the didactic strain for instance. It is an object with poesy to direct the mind as well as to please. The mind may be directed in two ways; either by precept or by example, either by teaching or by training. The exposition of how, when, and where, as on a map, is teaching; the exercises of a gymnasium constitute training. We see both these methods employed in the services of the Church, in some places the one, and in some the other, being deemed the more important. Sermons are for the most part precept: they expose the anatomy of our own and of other bodies, the arrangements of the different parts, the purposes they fulfil, how they act and how they are acted on; the other services, confession, praise, and prayer, are exercises, a noble running, leaping, and wrestling to fit us for battling with the world and becoming fellow-workers with God. The former is instruction in the theory, the latter is instruction in the practice, of a divine music. Now it is in this latter way that the poet endeavours to influence the mind, trusting in the unconscious power of a sympathy that instinctively leads us to imitate whatever we

can be brought to admire, and stamps upon our souls, for better for worse, the likeness of that which we attempt to imitate; at least, it is in this way that he endeavours to influence the mind by poems of the dramatic and of the lyrical order. Narrative poems are more akin to sermons in the manner of their influence; but it is to be observed that even sermons have the two methods of influencing. Thus, if the preacher, discoursing about faith, should tell his hearers what it is, and how, and why, and when, and through whom, and by whom, and by what means, it is called into exercise,—should proclaim the duty and the rewards of believing,—should declare the danger of not believing, and should entreat all by their hopes and by their fears to believe and live, his sermon would be of the preceptive order; but if, on the other hand, without saying a word about that faith to awaken which is the supposed aim of his discourse, he should endeavour by a recital of marvellous Power, Wisdom, and Love to place the object of faith vividly before the mind's eye, expecting it thus to be awakened unaware, and as it were by infection from himself, his sermon would belong to the other, the less conscious order. It is in this way that the narrative poet commonly influences the mind; but when his narrative is didactic, he affects the mind by the former, the conscious, method, as in Sir John Davies' poem on the Immortality of the Soul, and in the Georgics of Virgil. The Georgics are considered

as Virgil's most finished performance, yet, with the exception of certain episodes which are nothing to the point, they are seldom read out of school. This of itself may show that the conscious method of instruction is unfit for poesy. Of all kinds of poesy, the didactic is that which is least admired, and, from the foregoing short analysis, it will be seen that, as its very name indicates, it differs from every other kind of poesy by being more self-conscious. It is fair therefore to conclude that this kind of self-consciousness at any rate is harmful to poetic feeling.

It needs not to say, but only as a reminder, that the self-consciousness of the artist as such is also damaging to the poesy in which it appears. There are a hundred ways in which it may thus show itself. In the Lay of the Last Minstrel, for instance, we see the antiquarian memory of the poet ever and anon checking his fancy. Thus in Canto IV. 31,

> "I know right well that in their lay,
> Full many minstrels sing and say
> Such combat should be made on horse."

Then, again (Canto II. 22,) as if half afraid that his story may be too much for the reader's faith, he puts in such a makeweight as the following:

> "I cannot tell how the truth may be;
> I say the tale as 'twas said to me."

Other examples will be found in Cantos V. 6, V. 13,

VI. 5. Twice however in the course of the poem such statements come in with very great effect; namely in Canto III. 10,

> "Now if you ask who gave the stroke,
> I cannot tell, so mot I thrive:
> It was not given by man alive;"

and again in Canto VI. at the end of the seventh stanza. But the greatest art is to conceal art. The poet is often to his own hurt tempted to let out the secret of his skill. Wordsworth not seldom allows a glimpse behind the scenes, and one cannot sufficiently wonder at the hardihood with which he allows it in the midst of that splendid picture which contains the following lines:

> "The appearance instantaneously disclosed
> Was of a mighty palace—*boldly say*
> A wilderness of building."

The school of Boileau, confessedly wanting in genius, has received the praise at least of great art and great taste; yet how clumsy is the art, what can be more tasteless than the art, which directed the French Aristarque, as he is called, to give every the most worthless reading of his various verses! The most laughable instance of this kind is afforded by another Frenchman, Olivier Maillard, who (about 1500) at a time when it was considered graceful for the preachers to cough as they harangued, published a sermon in which he has

taken good care by means of *hemm, hemm* written in the margin, to point out all the places where he had thus cleared his throat.

As by the didactic and by the artistic, so also by a satiric self-consciousness, poetry is weakened and worsened. Some persons, who are very nice in their poetic taste, will none of wit, whatsoever the quality. By their account, wit is very superficial—abashed in presence of its betters, so that, wherever found, we are assured there can be nothing better along with it. The answer returned is, that froth may be seen even on the deepest waters. In both statements there is an inkling of truth. Wit is certainly not produced where there is any depth, but the energy of the deep passes on to the shallows of the shore, and the sparkling foam which rises there floats out again to sea. Wit is among the fruits of poesy what crabs are among apples, small and often very sour, but the stock from which all have sprung. It is always very difficult to distinguish between friendly wit and poesy, or to say when an expression passes from the one to the other. But there are two kinds of wit, and in one of these kinds is an element which will perhaps explain the misgivings and dislike aforesaid; there is more than wit, there is a sneer. The poet makes us at once pleased with his expression, displeased with his butt; and this jarring of poetic and antipoetic, this duplicity of feeling, gives rise to the doubt. Not that satire is always unpoetic;

it is highly poetic when fired by indignation and wrath; and only when built of cold and heartless mockeries does it fall from this rank. When the satirist wreaks his vengeance by a free and joyous sprite, like the delicate Ariel, every hit, every stroke is a musical beat; but when he has for his minister a close genius, like the little devil that Paracelsus kept prisoner in the pummel of his sword, it will be indeed a wonder if we have much of poetry. Every sneer is an icy thought, a contraction of the mind into itself. We therefore conclude that this kind of self-consciousness also is hurtful to poetry.

Not only, however, is the poesy weak and sickly where such tares are allowed to grow, but even the finest, the richest, crop is blighted when such mildew falls upon it from the reader. So long as a man chooses to lie trenched within his own mind, he will neither laugh at a jest, nor admire the daring confidence of still higher imaginations; all will be foolishness. And this is very easy; nothing easier than faultfinding; the virtues of a good mouser will do it all. Let us hope that the day of such criticism is gone or far spent, and not soon to return; the day, when as a serpent could not become a dragon without devouring another serpent, a writer cannot become a critic worthy of the name, without first preying upon a brother penman. It is indeed a question whether we are not now going to the other extreme of praising so lavishly, so indiscri-

minately, that the praise is about as valuable as the delighted cries of a whole henroost when each new egg is laid, whether its destiny be addle or not. It is however the more amiable weakness, and the temper which it indicates a very happy one. Self-consciousness must no doubt belong to the critic in a high degree; but if tainted with the corruption of sneers, will it not be what is called a little too high? It will not be easy to get a pithier description of a good critic than that which Winstanley gives of Matthew Paris, when speaking of his history: "Though he had sharp nails, he had clean hands."

It cannot be denied that the three forms of self-consciousness which have now been referred to, namely the didactic, the artistic, and the satiric, are dangerous to poesy; but unbelief, another form of the same, and which might almost be regarded as a variety of the satiric, is often quietly, if never broadly, asserted, to be in keeping with a poetic state of mind, nay essential to its perfectness. We shall see.

Says Lorenzo to Jessica, "Look how the floor of heaven is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;" and a little boy asks his mother, "Are not the stars nails in the floor of heaven?" Overlooking wholly the manner in which the man gave forth his idea, and the way in which the boy gave his, it will be seen that the feelings of both were the very same up to a certain point; both felt poetry, only the former, a moment afterwards, knew that he had been dreaming, while the latter knew it

not. People will at once allow that the man felt poetry, but the claims of the boy will perhaps be gainsaid, and simply because he was not so far awake as to know what he was about. In like manner, when we speak of a blushing rose or of a dewy pearl, our words are esteemed poetical; but the Laplanders, who were afraid to touch the first roses that they saw, thinking them to be blossoms of fire, and the ancients, who held that pearls were truly hardened dewdrops, are not deemed at all poetical, but very matter-of-fact; and simply because they firmly believed what they beautifully imagined. The Greek legend of Aphrodite, the seaborn goddess, and that other legend of the Centaurs, make fine poetry; but there is no poetry, nothing but hard prose, when the West Indians imagine that the Spaniards have indeed sprung from the foam of the sea, and when the Mexicans in their hearts think that the cavalry of Cortes are half man, half horse. According to this view, whatever we can believe, whether the tricks of a fairy, the wonders of science, the rising of the dead, or the dying of a God, would be naught for the poet; and those who read a romance without scenting its utter falsehood, never discover its poetry. The Utopia of Sir Thomas More has justly been regarded as a prose poem. Many, we are told, who took up the book on its first appearance, without being forewarned of its real character, were so thoroughly assured of its truthfulness, that learned men (the very names of some are

not withheld, Budeus and Johannes Paludanus) earnestly wished that preachers of the gospel could be sent to convert those islanders whose manners and customs were so pleasing; and sundry in England were very eager to undertake the voyage. Who has not heard also of the reverend gentleman who closed Gulliver's travels with the remark that there were some things in that book which—he—could—not—believe? But little knowledge had these men of poetry, the former none whatever.

If this, the view of Touchstone, and of many greater than he in the same calling, be correct; if poetry be of needs a fable, and its wordgarb a self-bewraying sham, then let every one be heartily thankful whom, with Audrey, the gods have not made poetical. But Mr Touchstone is so great a lover of motley, that he will not quarrel with us if—were it only for the sake of motley—we take a different view, and say that poetry is poetry only so long as we believe it. The afterthought or awakening is its deathblow, is nothing more than the knowledge that we had been dreaming. The mythology of Greece was poetry to the Greeks, not although, but because they believed it; and it is poetry to us only so long and so far as we can do the same. In the other view, poesy is lowered into a mere word-game, a kind of leasing where we utter self-evident lies by way of amusement, as when we speak of rage boiling when everybody knows that it cannot boil. The mind is thus

but playing with itself at bo-peep or hide-and-seek; and if so, we cannot wonder at the old divine who calls poesy the wine of devils, *vinum dæmonum;* for, being mere fiction or riddle, its advantages become as doubtful and of the same order as that thievery and guile which were allowed the youth of Sparta.

Perhaps an example will show more clearly the need of unconscious believing for the full enjoyment of poesy, whatever may be its real worth. Here are lines known to every one.

> "Behold the throne
> Of Chaos, and his dark pavilion spread
> Wide on the wasteful deep: with him enthroned
> Sat sable-vested Night, eldest of things,
> The consort of his reign; and by them stood
> Orcus and Ades and the dreaded name
> Of Demogorgon!"

We are so drawn out of ourselves by the preceding description, that we come to accept with childlike faith the revelation afterwards given of a name standing side by side with living giants; we believe it, wonder and rejoice. But when Hayley, in his Epitaph on Cowper, says the very same after his own fashion:

> "England, exulting in his spotless fame,
> Ranks with her dearest sons his favourite name;"

we have neither belief, wonder nor joy; surely anything but these. For why? we have been walking on flats all the way, looking at our feet and picking our

steps; we have never once so far forgotten ourselves as to allow a mortal man palm a rhyme upon our reason. Could we bring ourselves to believe it, imagination the while struggling to encompass it, all glorious and poetic would it be, even as the revelation of Milton. And we may say, generally, that whenever and however faith is thus excited under a press of imagination (which in truth it always is and must be by a necessity of the imaginative faculty) the state of mind so produced, if compared with that in which we read lofty poesy, will be found at bottom to be the very same. This will best be seen in an extreme case.

Æschylus more than once speaks of seeing a sound; others of the Greek poets the same, and among them we find even Sophocles; Buffon somewhere says of the dog, that it sees a smell (qu'il voit l'odorat); and Wordsworth speaks of an eye both deaf and silent. Thus to endow one sense with the powers of another is one of the most daring outrages that poesy can commit upon our common sense; it is a stumbling-block in every one's way, it will startle most, it will disgust not a few. No great bard can be guilty of such an extravagance, but when soaring to the loftiest heights of lyrical song, and no reader can endure it unless hurried onward recklessly, believingly and joyfully before a mighty rushing wind. All right: he takes it for granted, and away he goes without stopping to think. If he stop to think,

he will coldly sneer, and declare it to be nonsense; as the ice will break under a slow skater, which is, notwithstanding, strong enough to bear one skimming at full speed. Let the mind be arrested as it glances at lightning-pace over such a passage; and let us suppose it still confiding and pleased, but its heat much lowered and its speed much lessened: wherein does such a mood of mind differ from that of Sir Kenelm Digby when, with imagination wondering and pleased, he calmly and undoubtingly tells of a Spanish nobleman who could hear by his eyes, and see words as they fell from the lip? As he was ever the true, the

> "Prevailing poet, whose undoubting mind
> Believed the magic wonders that he sung;"

so has he alone a deep sympathy with that song, who, for the time at least, regards it, word and thing, more certain than the everlasting hills. We therefore again conclude that the crosslights of self-consciousness are hurtful to poetic feeling.

Having thus considered in due order the three laws of poetry, let us look to the result. In the First Book was examined the nature of Pleasure: in the present Book has been examined the nature of Poetic Pleasure. Poetic pleasure has been shown to differ from other pleasure by being imaginative, so that Poetry may shortly be defined to be Imaginative Pleasure; and if for the latter of these two words we substitute a definition, Poetry will then more fully be defined, *The imaginative, harmonious, and unconscious activity of the soul.* Although perhaps enough has now been brought forward to warrant this definition, I may be allowed in conclusion to cover it with a passage from a poet than whom, whatever may have been his practice, it may safely be said that, in the present century, no English poet, unless it be Coleridge, has evinced a deeper insight into the nature, into the ends, and into the requirements of poesy; and Coleridge excelled him not so much in the knowledge as in the understanding of these important points. Great, manifold, and manifest as were the failings of John Keats, perhaps in the whole history of letters there is not another instance to be found of a man dying so early and at the same time leaving so profound an impression upon the mind of his age; although indeed it must be admitted that his influence, however strong, is not likely to be lasting, and that erelong he will share the fate of Sir Philip Sidney, who, being the idol of his own day, is now little

heard of, far less known, and least of all read. The following lines will no doubt have been regarded as a mere ranting upcry of poesy by those of his readers who have not remarked the depth of meaning contained in all his utterances on this his favourite theme; and, for myself, I will own that years ago I passed over them without stopping to consider, far less to discover, the truth of which now, when better prepared, I can see that they are full. We do not understand Keats; we do not understand comets; perhaps we never will. Here are the lines:

> "A drainless shower
> Of light is poesy: 'tis the supreme of power;
> 'Tis might half-slumbering on its own right arm."

The first of these verses declares the first law of poetry, its imaginative activity; the next implies the second law, harmonious power; and the last proclaims the third law, unconscious might. Thus by a single glance and a short flight of the intuitive faculty, heights are attained which the understanding, footsore with trying to be surefooted, can reach only after much, long, painful, and painstaking clambering.

As in the case of pleasure, the foregoing definition accounts for the difficulty that has always been and ever will be felt in fully explaining the nature of poetry. There may be other reasons for failure, and for our knowing next to nothing of the laws of imagination,

while the laws of thought have been fathomed to the bottom; such as that the Thinker will have little imagination, and therefore little knowledge of its doings, while the Dreamer, having much, will be unable to wield the scalpel-knife of the former; but the main cause must evidently be the self-blindness occasioned by imaginative activity, and necessary to a sense of pleasure; a deficiency which can be entirely overcome only by a manysided mind of great reach, with great powers of memory; in short, by such a mind as never yet has appeared, and perhaps never will,—a dreamy Aristotle.

BOOK THIRD.

THE ART OF POETRY.

PART I. THE KINDS OF POESY.

PART II. THE LANGUAGE OF POESY.

PART FIRST.

THE KINDS OF POESY.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL.

In a letter to Sir William Davenant, Hobbes makes the remark, that as philosophers have divided the universe into three regions, celestial, aerial and terrestrial, so poets have divided the world into three correspondent regions, court, city and country,—whence have proceeded three kinds of poesy, heroic, scommatic, and pastoral. This division will be better understood, if it is remembered that, about the same time, he published in his Leviathan a table of the sciences, amongst which he reckons poesy—the Gaya Sciencia of the Spaniards, and, by his account, the science "of magnifying, vilifying, &c." The above division therefore will stand thus: heroic or magnifying poesy, pastoral or contented

poesy, and scommatic or vilifying poesy; like an insect, divided into three parts, with a sting in the tail. Like an insect also, he gives poesy six legs to go upon, a narrative and a dramatic leg for each division; so that magnifying poesy has the Epos and Tragedy, contented poesy has the Bucolic and the Pastoral Drama, while vilifying poesy has the Satire and the Comedy. Paulo majora canamus.

Of poesy there are at bottom three kinds, Dramatic, Narrative and Lyrical; Play, Tale and Song. Seldom indeed shall we meet with specimens of any one kind that are quite pure. One is ever mingling with another; whence for instance comes the ballad, a cross between tale and song; whence too the pastoral, in which all three combine. Even the purest Epic will very often take a dramatic form; the speeches being delivered not in a narrative style, that is, obliquely (He said that he did it), but directly as in the drama, (He said, I did it). Yet the division is very manifest. It is not so manifest, however, although equally true, that these three kinds go to form a trinity, the second begotten of the first, and the third flowing from both. For the Epic poet and we his readers or his hearers stand in the very relation of dramatis personæ, his narrative being a long and the only remaining speech of a play that is otherwise lost; while again the Lyrical bard is an epic of a particular cast—one who sings the Epos of his own soul.

Now this objective trio tallies point by point with the subjective trinity unfolded in the Second Book of this treatise, the triune law of poetic feeling. The three kinds of poesy pair with the three laws of poetry, Dramatic with the law of imagination, Epic with that of harmony, and Lyrical with that of unconsciousness. This will be self-evident as we go along, and more especially when we shall have grasped the innermost meanings of the different kinds of poesy. Partly, however, it may be seen at once. You can at once understand how the drama, the essence of which is action, should be affianced to the law of activity; how the epic, taking the fleshly form of history, and therefore, with history, being the embodiment of experience, should, so long as experience is possible only through the correlation of subject and object, in plain English, through the affinity of what is in the mind for what is out of the mind, be connected with the law of harmony; and lastly, how, like water from the rock, the outpourings of the lyric should spring from the law of unconsciousness. Personality or selfhood triumphs in the drama; the divine and all that is not Me triumphs in the lyric; while, lying betwixt both, the epic is the complete harmony of self with unself. The first delights in the imagination of variety; the last depicts the struggle of one mind after the absolute One; to the middle belongs variety in unity, variety of life and character conforming with the narrator's individuality. Such being the principles that underlie

the orders of poesy, it needs not to show that they accord with the three laws of poetry. It may seem strange at first sight that the lyric, wherein the poet's individuality is most apparent, should be the offspring of the law of unconsciousness; and that the drama, wherein it is least evident, should come of that law which is the most conscious. A second thought will convince the reader that we are most ourselves when we forget ourselves, and that in becoming self-conscious we become what we are not. What Sophocles said of Æschylus, that he always did the right thing, but without knowing it, affords a glimpse into his own frame of mind as well as into that of his rival: the most truly dramatic of the Greek tragedians betrayed his own self-consciousness in drawing attention to the unconsciousness of the most highly lyrical.

I.	II.	III.
Law of Imagination;	Law of Harmony;	Law of Unconsciousness.
Dramatic Poesy;	Epic;	Lyrical.

These trinities, objective and subjective, are paralleled by another, which has an outer and an inner meaning, as referring both to the history and to the spirit of poesy. Let us first view it in the outward or historic aspect.

Every one must be more or less acquainted with that distinction between romantic and classical poesy drawn at the close of last century by the German school of critics, and since then adopted on all hands. It was

in truth the old comparison between the ancients and the moderns pursued on deeper grounds; Perrault and Lamothe, Racine and Boileau raised from the dead and ghostly in their talk; a French distinction done into German; history turned philosophy. The distinction has been carried into every branch of art, but chiefly has been applied to the drama, and there employed in settling the rival claims of the French and Italian theatres on the one side, of the English and Spanish on the other. The dramas of the one are said to be written in a classical, those of the other in a romantic vein; and as the French critics had trumpeted the praise of the former, the German critics entered the lists as challengers of these pretensions, and as champions of the latter. Successful as they were in thus battling for the right, it was not all victory with the champions. The issue at stake lay not entirely between the classical and the romantic dramas; it lay, or was understood to lie, between the whole of classical art and the whole of romantic art; and these issues, the lesser and the greater, seemed to be so interwoven, that whichever school of art won the dramatic prize, to that school belonged the prize in every other department. If the drama of classical must yield to that of romantic mould, why, for the same reason, should not every art of classical cast rank below every art of romantic? These issues were never fairly disentangled; nor could they be unravelled so long as no distinct ideas were attached

to the words, classical and romantic; words, which if they expressed any thing more than the terms, ancient and modern, formerly in use, kept their meaning to themselves, dark and miserly as the cabala. Ancient and modern—these were words denoting a plain historical distinction; but classical and romantic, beyond the historical, implied a philosophical, distinction. They only implied it however; for, following them in hopes of catching their meaning as it glimmers through page after page, we soon find that we might as well be chasing a Will-o-wisp or a lapwing through the marshes. Take a few examples. To say that classical art is heathen, romantic art Christian, is a change of words without a stiver of gain. To say that classical art gives expression to the poetry of joy, romantic art to the poetry of desire, is to utter false coin. To say that classical art is founded on melody, and that romantic art is built of harmony, has the ring of true metal, but no earthly use did they make of it. Is it wonderful that thus attaching no definite, no available, meaning to the words, they should have failed to separate sharply the points at issue, and should have so allotted their praise and their blame that often one can hardly tell how far the praise was in earnest and how far the blame was merited.

The division of poesy into romantic and classical, though complete so far as it goes, and sufficient for the practical purposes of the time, is not complete if we take

a wider view whether of the history or of the spiritual meaning of poesy: we must add a third division. There is not only a modern and an antique, but there is also a primitive poesy; that there is a Western and a Græcian is not more true than that there is likewise an Eastern poesy; if there is a romantic and a classical, there is also a divine poesy. This threefold instead of the twofold division will make everything straight. For it is a notable circumstance that the controversy between the romantic and classical schools came to hinge upon a question of dramatic fitness. Now, if the reader is prepared to accept this doctrine—that romantic art is essentially dramatic, and that classical art is not so, but truly epic, the third or primitive kind being by nature lyrical, he will understand how it should have come to such a pass, and see moreover how it is not out of keeping to award the dramatic ivy-crown to modern art, while in every thing else the Greek bears away the palm. And if his own critical insight will not at once assure him of the doctrine, perhaps the following arguments may have some weight.

I.	II.	III.
Dramatic art;	Epic art;	Lyrical art.
Modern art;	Antique;	Primitive.
Western art;	Græcian;	Eastern.
Romantic art;	Classical;	Divine.

In each column of the foregoing table, it must be self-evident that the three last titles are titles of one style of

art; and it is to be proved that they refer to the self-same style of art as that denominated by the first of all.

There can of course be no doubt as to the lyrical tone of Eastern or primitive poesy; it may only be doubted whether the prevailing tone of modern poesy be dramatic, and the prevailing tone of the antique be epic. Let us look then to the epics of the former and to the dramas of the latter. Milton and Dante are the two greatest narrative poets of romantic times. Yet Milton roughcast his poem as a drama, and when giving it another, its present, shape, expressed, with an instinct which lesser men dare not gainsay, a fear lest he might be living in an age too late for epic poesy; and his modern compeer, with a like albeit less-informed instinct, borrowing from the drama, entitled his work The Comedy of Dante Alighieri. Thus on the one hand, the modern epic bewrays itself, and proves that it is the child of a dramatic age. On the other hand, the antique drama tells the tale of its epic parentage. Who in these modern times are the great sticklers for a classical taste, and for a classical taste in the drama? They are the heirs of that language remarkable above all the Romanesque languages for the store of tales which it has hoarded up—these chiefly the unconscious labours of its infancy. The old French or Languedoui has but few lyrics: romances and fabliaux form the bulk of its literature. The genius of the Trouvère was all for narra-

tive; and his mantle so remained with those who in aftertimes turned to the theatre that their drama is really a narrative delivered by many mouths; in other words, their classic drama is an epic drama. And here let it be observed, that while the history of the drama is the same in every country where it is allowed to run its course unfettered, there is a most marked resemblance between its rise in France and its rise in Greece. For France had not only, in the north, poets of an epic turn, Trouvères, speaking the Languedoui, but had also, in the south, poets of a lyrical turn, Troubadors, who employed the Languedoc. We find that the former flourished chiefly not at the French court, but under the sceptre of the English sovereigns in England and in Normandy; and although the latter, the Provençal, poets after the Albigensian war could no longer be said to flourish, yet their influence never died away, but passing into the sister dialects of Italy and of Castile, there lived, as it also in a manner continued to survive in the south of France. And it was the union of those two streams, the lyricism of Southern France, of Italy, and of Spain acting upon the epic genius of the true French, that gave birth to their drama such as it is. If instead of the Languedoui and the Languedoc we place the Ionic and Doric dialects (largely understood,) the former employed by the epic and other cyclic poets, and chiefly, be it marked, among the colonies on the further side of the Ægean, while

the latter, the speech of an elder race, was the very tartan of the lyric, do you not see that among the Greeks as among the French the same elements were at work, and working too under circumstances very nearly the same? What the Greek drama owed to the dithyrambic and other choral odes connected with the worship of Dionysus, the wine god, has often been rated so highly as to leave an impression that it sprung mainly if not entirely from a lyrical stock; a notion fairly met and set aside by the saying of Æschylus himself, that his tragedies were but scraps from the great feast supplied by Homer. Here is a receipt in full of a large epic debt, and coming from the most lyrical of the Greek dramatists it is entitled to the greatest weight. This meeting of lyrical with epic tendencies gave rise upon an entirely new stage, at Athens as at Paris, to the classical drama, a drama which in the parts not wholly lyrical, that is to say, in the parts which have a dramatic form, is truly epic in thought, word and deed; dealing in narrative; delighting in the historical tenses, quite unlike the romantic drama, where if a narrative is to be delivered it is delivered in the present tense, and often, as in the well-known case of good Launcelot Gobbo, one of a thousand, the very circumstances are acted by the speaker. "The fiend is at mine elbow, and tempts me, saying to me, *Gobbo, Launcelot Gobbo, good Launcelot, or good Gobbo, or good Launcelot Gobbo, use your legs, take the start, run away.* My conscience says, *No:*

take heed, honest Launcelot; take heed, honest Gobbo; or, as aforesaid, *honest Launcelot Gobbo, do not run; scorn running with thy heels.*"

This leads us behind the scenes, and to the inwards of poesy, in the unfolding of which still further and stronger proof will be forthcoming of the position above maintained, that romantic art is dramatic, that classical art is epic, and that the divine or primitive art is lyrical. For the Drama is truly a thing of Present time, the Epic of Past, and the Lyric of Future; and if, while showing this, it can also be shown that the Western mind dwells chiefly in the Present, that the Greek dwelt in the Past, and that the Eastern dwelt in the Future, something will be advanced very forcibly bearing on that position. We begin with the latter statement.

That the Hebrew, the highest type of the lyrical mind, fed upon futurity, that the Greek, the highest type of the epic mind, fed upon the olden time, and that each revelled in its own department of thought with a zeal and a zest otherwhere unequalled, can hardly be doubted. The Hebrew lived upon prophecy, and in every thing, even in their buildings, it may be seen how the Orientals looked forward to after-ages. The prevailing feature of their architecture is its massive grandeur, its stability; they built for posterity; said Solomon at the dedication of the temple, "I have built an house of habitation for Thee, and a place for Thy dwelling for ever." The only exception to this rule is the

Saracenic architecture, and it is an exception that strengthens the rule; since, if need were, it could easily be shown that the slenderness for which it is noted was a true offspring of that Moslem faith which, disregarding a future upon earth, courted such a death as might ensure a future in the paradise above, amid the bowers of the Houris. Greek architecture, on the other hand, neither mocked the eye, as did the Moorish palaces, by a seeming frailty and contempt of permanence, nor, like the heavy piles of Egypt and the East, forced the idea of strength and of futurity upon the beholder; it sought rather, by marble friezes and other sculptures embodying legends of the past, to set the hoary crown of eld upon the brow of their temples. And if for a moment any doubt can arise that the Greeks have outstript every people, ancient or modern, in the remembrance of their forefathers and the days of yore, it can only arise amongst that German school of critics who, like birds of prey, would at one fell swoop tear from the field of history and carry up to the cloudland of fable whatever legends refer to events preceding the Dorian conquest of the Peloponnesus, (B. C. 1104). Here is not the place to combat a theory which would thus deny to the greater and better part of Greek story, including the Homeric lay, even so much truth as may be contained in the stories of Charlemagne or of Arthur, and would sink it to the level of such tales as Palmerin of England or Amadis de Gaul, if not lower still, to those

romances which, for having turned the brain of Don Quixote de la Mancha were by the priest and the barber most righteously given to the flames; nor, although proper to point out its existence, can it be worth while to confute a heresy which has never spread to this country, and which the instinct of a child will hold false against any and every comer. At any rate, it cannot be denied that, whatever amount of fable may cleave to their legendary lore, the Greeks themselves firmly believed in its truth; and in this lore there was amassed for them a heritage that no other nation can boast of, and that no other nation so highly valued. They valued it so highly that, although the query might often be renewed, What's Hecuba to us or we to Hecuba? the moderns have again and again been smitten with a desire to record these legends in preference to their own.

As the Greek thus dwelt in the past, as the Hebrew dwelt in the future, so the modern dwells rather in the present. This is one of those facts which are so manifest that it would scarcely be more difficult to prove them than to prove a mathematical axiom. You see a token of it in the daily newspapers; you will find a token of it in your watch-pocket. In the preface to his work on Corneille, M. Guizot describes the French mind as ever fluctuating between the past and the future. The same is to be said of the modern Europæan generally: his is the present life. The Hebrew looked to a golden age before him, a Messianic reign; the Greek

looked to a golden age behind him, a Saturnian reign; to the Christian the kingdom of Heaven is already come. Looking both before and after, sometimes he forgets and sometimes he remembers the past; sometimes he takes thought and sometimes he takes no thought of the morrow; but he has cast his sheet-anchor in the present hour. He conceives happiness to be a present reality. Either he is blest or he is unblest; if the former, he knows that he is blest now and for ever; if the latter, he knows that he has but himself to blame, and that the bliss which he hopes to enjoy hereafter he may have now for the asking. In our English, to have is to enjoy. On the other hand, the Græcian idea of happiness may be learned from what Aristotle says in the first book of the Nichomachean Ethics, and from what is better known, the stories of Tellus and of Cleobis and Biton which Solon told to Crœsus, showing that no man can be called happy until we have seen the end of him. Poor soul, he must die and his friends must see him décently buried before they can offer their gratulations. They can say He was happy, not He is happy. The Jew said neither: he could not accept the Pagan idea, and the Christian idea was foreign not only to his nature but also to his language—the Hebrew verb having no present tense. As the Jew of Houndsditch counts upon a man's reversionary wealth, so the Jew of old looked to a man's future prospects, and judged him accordingly. You trace him dogging

after this idea throughout almost every psalm; talking lightly of past, hugging present misery, if only by the help of God he will hereafter be revenged upon fortune, his enemy.

The drift of these remarks will be learned from the following propositions, the bare statement of which will, I flatter myself, win assent. The Hebrew and lyrical idea of a poet is that of a prophet, *vates;* he divines, he foretells. According to the epic or Græcian idea, the Muses are all daughters of Memory, and in narrative every thing is related as bygone. According to our modern or dramatic idea, the poet is the type and spokesman of his age, and by means of his art he represents every thing as present. In other words, the drama is a crystallization of the present, the epic of the past, and the lyric of the future. And as it has been shown that the Western mind inhabits the present, that the Greek dwelt in the past, and that the Oriental peers into the future, we have herein evidence that the art of romantic times is dramatic, that the art of the classical era is epic, and that the primitive or eastern development of art is lyrical.

Another proof of this, and a pretty strong proof, lies in a fact which has already been hinted. There are but three possible ideas of quantity, One, Sundry, All,—Unity, Plurality, Totality; and it has already (p. 83,) in other words been stated that in the drama we perceive a plurality, that in the epic we perceive a to-

tality, and that in the lyric we perceive a unity. To perceive this clearly care must be taken to distinguish between unity and totality; since that subordination of parts to a whole which is in common parlance called unity, is not so called in philosophy; it is properly called totality. Totality is a multitude considered as one; the philosophic idea of unity is that of a unit, an indivisible whole. Thus understood, it becomes plain that in the drama we have simply a plurality, as a plurality of persons; that in the lyric we have a unity, as the individual singer; and that in the epic we have a totality, as many persons in one. Now then, if the Oriental genius be lyrical, if the Græcian be epic, and if the Western be dramatic, we should expect to find the Asiatic in general giving a preference to ideas of unity, the Greek showing his love of totality, and the modern European lost in admiration of countless diversity. And this verily we find.

The Oriental mode of thought shines very strikingly in the Oriental idea of God; which is unitarian, as among the Hebrews, the Mohammedans and others. Or witness the purely monarchal sovereignties of the East; the Pharaohs and the Sultans, the great King, the great Mogul, the grand Llama, the Khan of Tartary and the Celestial Emperor. We read no other lesson in the idea of a hermit life which, although some time common in Europe, did not arise in Europe, but spread thitherward from the East, arising out of the

overpowering sense of loneliness which is peculiar to that part of the globe; and this again, this hermit life, is but a miniature of that insulation which is so rife among whole tribes and classes of the East, and which, whether lurking among the mysteries of the Druses or among the mysteries of the Yesidis, whether manifested in the castes of Egypt or in the castes of Hindostan, and whether guarded by the Levitical ceremonies of the Hebrews or by the wall and the badges and all the freemasonry of the Chinese, endeavours by unpassable barriers to shut out from all their feelings and all their dealings the Samaritan, the Pariah, the publican and the sinner. Herein we trace not a sense of inward completeness, but a sense of unity or separation. The same is discovered in many of the Eastern buildings, in pyramids, and obelisks and towers and minarets, some of the mausoleums and many of the pagodas; nay, in things the most trifling, as in that picture—startling for its originality as much as for its grotesqueness—drawn by the Arabic imagination of the devil: He is said to have but one eye (Ishmael having at Mecca knocked out the other with a stone,) and his beard is but one, great, long, grisly, hair. It is equally manifest that the Greek had an eye for totality, as for example, in his religious creed, which cannot rightly be called polytheistic, for it was really pantheistic; as also in his ideal of a state, a whole of many members. In science and in art we behold the like. If we compare ancient with modern science, we find this difference,

that whereas the ancient philosophers reasoned from wholes to parts, the modern philosophers reason from parts to wholes; the former by deduction, the latter by induction. The Greek by a kind of intuition, that often however was little better than guesswork, seized upon something that looked like an innermost law, an omnipresent fact, a necessary existence, say the existence of number; and by the law of number, Pythagoras or the Pythagorean philosopher would set about the explanation of all the phenomena that came in his way. The modern philosopher, on the other hand, beginning with the phenomena, endeavours by the comparison of a thousand particulars, to discover something like general rules, out of these rules to discover a law still more general, and so to mount higher and higher, ever nearing but hopeless of ever reaching that fountain-head of existence from which flow the tides of all possible being, or that keystone which can bind all possible knowledge into the perfect arch of truth. From the discoveries of science if we turn to the inventions of art, still the same contrast is forced upon our notice; the Greek artist presenting us with a whole whose parts are in the most entire keeping, the modern artist presenting us with a mass of details that have not learned the same perfect obedience. In brief, as nothing is more glaring, so nothing will be more readily admitted than that the Greek craved above all things for totality, and that the modern riots in the midst of plurality.

The dramatic bent of Western Europe, the epic mood of ancient Greece, and the lyrical feeling of the Morning-land may be descried as clearly, and might be described as fully, from a different corner of the heavens. The whole literature of a dramatic era will look at things from the position and with the eye of the reader, constantly employing the second personal pronoun; that of a narrative age will chiefly employ the third personal pronoun; and that of lyrical times will be remarkable for its use of the first. This is manifest; and it is manifest in the three great epochs which I have described as dividing the history of poesy. In that primitive literature of the East, the highest type of which and to us the best known is contained in the Holy Scriptures of the Jews, who has not been struck with the lofty egotism which runs through almost every page,—I saw, I heard, I thought, I felt? In the pages of the antique, who does not see that the writer minds neither himself nor his reader, but is wholly taken up with the persons and the things that he is describing? And in modern letters, who can overlook the pointed manner in which the reader, the gentle reader, *candidus lector*, is so often addressed—the familiar you-and-me style that is kept up from first to last?

Although this argument from the personal pronouns, the foregoing argument from the categories of quantity, and the other argument from our ideas of time, may

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seem to be any thing but kindred, and are indeed in a great measure independent of each other; it may help to rivet into a stronger chain the links of the proof to be led in the following pages if it can be shown that they are nevertheless very nearly allied.

First of all, it can be shown that we think of time present as a plurality, of time past as a totality, and of time future as a unity. In thinking of the present time, what is the nature of our idea? Clearly, we do not conceive the present to be a whole, or a something in itself complete; we think of it as an indefinite succession of moments; one, two, three, four, five, and so on for ever; a plurality. On the other hand, the past and the future are each conceived to be a whole; but the former divisible, the latter indivisible. We have had experience of the past, of the future we have no experience; the past has a chronology, the future none; the past therefore is a whole divided into parts, a total,—the future is a whole without parts, a unit. The unity of the future as by us conceived is also apparent in the contrast which is commonly made between Time and Eternity. Death is spoken of as the passage from one kind of time to another. Time, according to our experience of past and present, is a course of many changes; but our idea of Eternity is that of something unchangeable, an everlasting now, an immortal moment; and how indeed could the idea of

change be found in that of eternity, seeing the idea of change is given only in experience, and we have had no experience of the future?

Next, it may be shown that we think of You in the present tense, that He is regarded as past, and that I project myself into the future. Of course, any of the pronouns can be used with any of the tenses. Thus we can say, that He strikes, or that He will strike as easily as that He struck; but there is this difference between the phrases, that in the last we speak of the past as past—He, of whom we have a prior knowledge, did such or such an act, a particular instance of what is prior; whereas in the other phrases, we connect the past with the present or with the future—He, the aforesaid, or aforethought, or aforeseen, or aforeknown, does or will do so and so. Now, in speaking to You, it is evidently implied that You are present; and in speaking of Him it is evidently implied that He is absent and gone. In these cases there is no difficulty whatsoever; the only difficulty lies in proving that I am of the future, and it is but the shadow of a difficulty. For what is it that makes Me what I am? what is it that constitutes the Me? what is my very Self? It is the power of Will. I AM is the incommunicable name, the essential attribute of God: the essential name and attribute of me, a creature, is, I Will—in the future tense.

Lastly, it can be shown that we think of the first personal pronoun as a unity, of the second as a plurality,

and of the third as a totality. That I am to myself a unity is plain. That to me You are more than one person, that You are a plurality, is shown by my addressing, not thee, but You. Of course, the Quakers will scout such an idea. They say it is false to address one man as if he were more than one; they say, that the habit of so doing began in flattery of the great; and they may point to the analogous use of the pronoun *we*. The employment of the pronoun *we* is not analogous, being almost confined to those who, like princes, and bishops, and authors, are supposed not only to utter their own sentiments, but also to be the mouthpiece of a court, a cabinet or a coterie, a school, a sect or a sanhedrim. And the habit of addressing one man as if he were more than one is too deeply seated to be charged with flattery or any kind of falsehood. As the very deep strata to which the Artesian wells are sunk may be found lying on the surface of some far mountain, and thence deriving their supply of water, so what at first and afar off may have been a mere surface feeling, may in the course of time strike down to the lowest beds of the heart; but hypocrisy is not one of those feelings. The courtiers of Macedon might ape the wry neck of Alexander; but if we find whole nations with their necks awry, if we go to the countries visited by Othello, where dwell the Cannibals, the Anthropophagi, and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders, of a surety these men are not hypocrites, and their heads

are thus held and fashioned, not by the caprice of the wearer, but according to the will of the Maker. Of a like universality is the employment of the pronoun *you* amongst those romantic nations which can boast a great dramatic literature; and it is the shallowest and the narrowest reasoning to say of such a practice that it is founded in falsehood. I do not mean to say that the Quakers are bound to follow the customs of their fellow-countrymen. Of all forms of Christianity, of all forms of religion, theirs is the most egotistic, and such is the temper of their whole mind. It is not a gross nor an offensive egotism; perhaps at first it may pass unobserved; but there it is, a dash of refined egotism in all they think, and say, and do. They, therefore, cannot be expected to understand that dramatic state of feeling which is involved in addressing one man as if he were more than one. A dramatic state of feeling it is, and a dramatic style of address, as partly may be gathered from the fact that in modern Europe it arose with the rise and grew with the growth of the drama, until now when, although we produce no great dramas, yet the whole of our literature, it would not be too much to say, the whole of modern art, breathes in and out the breath of a dramatic life, it is more than ever deeply rooted and widely spread. Consider also the state of feeling out of which springs the style of address, and it will be seen how truly dramatic is the one, and how truly natural is the other. A man seldom has doubts of his

own identity: I may hate to-day what I loved yesterday, and may glory now in what formerly was my shame; but I see good cause for these changes; whatever others may think of me, I feel that I am not inconsistent, and that, however altered, I am still the self-same being. But you—when I see you pleased with what once gave you pain, and scorning what once you admired, what wonder if, not having a clue to these changes, I can hardly believe that you are one and the same person before and after they take place. And besides these greater revulsions of feeling, there must be a thousand little sayings and doings of yours which to me will seem unaccountable, as I must be unable to explain them by my previous knowledge of your individual self. Being thus unable to see in them anything characteristic of you, I cannot help attaching to each of them a separate personality. In short, until I know you so thoroughly that in any given case I could assuredly foretell what you would think, what you would say, and what you would do, I must (however unconsciously) regard you as not one, but more than one person; you are in yourself a host. And while I thus look upon myself as a unity, and upon you as a plurality, it will be found that both of us look upon a third party as a totality. For what is the difference between a plural and a total? A total is a multitude complete, many considered as one; whereas a plural is a multitude undefined, many considered simply as more than one. Now, in using the

second personal pronoun, I imply that you are present, and that you are present with a capability of action, therefore with a possibility of showing yourself in a new light and with a new personality. You thus appear to me simply as an undefined number, that is to say, a plurality, of persons. But, in speaking of a man as a third party, we imply no such possibility, we imply his absence, we imply that our knowledge of him is past. We therefore, while still regarding him as a plural, regard him no longer as a plural of number undefined, but as a plural to which nothing more is to be added in the meantime, a plural complete, in one word, a total. And we can thus in a lesser degree say of every one what Dryden said of the Duke of Buckingham:

> "A man so various that he seemed to be
> Not one, but all mankind's epitome."

I.	II.	III.
Dramatic art;	Epic art;	Lyrical art.
Present;	Past;	Future.
Plurality;	Totality;	Unity.
You;	He;	I.

Such is a tabular view of the meanings which we have as yet discovered in poesy. These, however, are but stepping-stones to higher ideas. Present, Past and Future—Plurality, Totality and Unity—You, He and I—are symbolic of those leading ideas—the Beautiful, the True, and the Good, which the three orders of poesy,

Dramatic, Epic and Lyrical, embody. These are the grand conceptions upon which I desire to lay stress. And as hereafter I have to treat of them separately, let me here say once for all, and beg the reader to keep in mind, that they form an inseparable trinity, and that where any one is, there—although perhaps not so prominently —will the others be also. The three ideas are present in each kind of poesy; but one is lord paramount of each, while the others for the time being are as vassals. The Beautiful, whose realm is the Drama, leans on the shoulder of Truth, while entertaining Goodness as an honoured guest; the escutcheon of Truth, hung over the Epic, has for its supporters on either side the Beautiful and the Good; and the sovereign Good, sovereign of the Lyric, has Beauty for a ladye love, Truth for a faithful squire and boon companion. All in due order: and in advancing the proofs it will of course be taken for granted that the facts will best be learned, not from the lower, but from the very highest forms of art,—in dramatic poesy from Tragedy, in narrative poesy from the Epic, and in lyrical poesy from the Hymn.

First of all, then, see how the three times, Present, Past, and Future, shadow forth the ideas of Beauty, of Truth and of Good. Partly and dimly this may be seen in our common modes of speech. The opening lines of Endymion are now almost hackneyed:

> "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
> Its loveliness increases; it will never

Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing."

It has no past, it has no future, it lives an everlasting now. In the language of the Berkeleyan philosophy, its *esse* is *percipi;* being half-created by the mind, like those enchanted beasts of the story-books, who remain beasts until some innocents come and marry them out of pity, when lo, they are turned into princes and princesses beautiful to behold. Beauty is thus a present reality, a bird in the hand. And truth, what is truth? Beauty is a jewel that may be cut into a thousand shapes: truth is a pearl ever one and entire, in whose formation we have had no hand. It lies at the bottom of a well; it is aged and timeworn. Do you not always think of truth as old? we constantly speak of it as such. Good again, the sovereign good, is yet in store and yet to come. It is that wonderful philosopher's stone, of power to make everything it touches a piece of gold, which from the beginning of the world we have all been seeking, but which has never been found, nor ever will be found. It is always becoming, never is; a to-morrow that refuses to make a will and die; a to-morrow of which to-day is always the heir-apparent, never, alas, the heir; to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow.

But this very hazy interpretation of the symbols of time, although floating unconsciously in our daily

thoughts, and, although true enough, would, on the page of criticism, if nothing clearer were given, be the veriest trifling. The interpretation will be quite plain, if we translate the language of Time into the language of Space. The past is whence we have come, the present is where we are, the future is whither we go; and Whence, Where, Whither? are questions evidently involving the aforesaid ideas of the True, the Beautiful and the Good. The first is a question of past history, of origin, of cause, that is to say, of Truth; the second is a question of present worth, of what a thing is in itself, and for itself, that is to say, of Beauty; the third is a question of future consequences, of utilities, of ultimate ends, that is to say, of Good.

Secondly, be it observed, that we regard Beauty as plural, Truth as a total, and Good as a unit. There are beauties many, and truths many; but we can think of beauties existing independently one of another, while we cannot so think of truths. Truth we regard as a web which, if any one thread were awanting, could no longer hold together; a Rupert's drop, which would burst if the smallest piece were broken away; a cloud, that moveth altogether if it move at all; the commandment of God, to violate the least part of which is to violate the whole. Given any one truth, we feel that had we faculties to work out the problem, we should find all possible truths implicated in that one. But we do not by any means see that in any one form of

beauty every other is implied, nor that in denying one we by consequence deny all beauties. And thus it becomes plain that while we regard truth as a grand total, we regard beauty simply as a plural. And as for Good, it is one. There are not many goods; but many things have the name of good which bear favourably, or are supposed to bear favourably, upon the last end of our existence, the alone, the sovereign Good.

It remains to be shown that there is a vital connexion between You, He, and I, and the Beautiful, the True, and the Good. If not directly, this can at least be proved indirectly. For Metaphysic, or the science of pure being, has three ideas to which all others are subordinate, God, Freedom and Immortality; and it can be shown that while these ideas are the several grounds upon which alone the True, the Beautiful, and the Good are thinkable, they are also involved in the conceptions of He, You, and I. We begin by showing the latter.

You; what is my state of mind in calling upon You? I do not think of you as an Immortal, neither do I think of your Divine origin; but I think of you as now and here existent, a man of whose next thought, or word, or deed, I am uncertain, a man of Free Will. He; we have nothing to do with His Immortality; as little do we think of His Freedom; with Him we have no colloquy of word or of action; we expect nothing save that He will be as He has

been; we regard Him simply as the watch that Paley finds on the heath, and everybody knows what that means. I once heard it said by a man of earnest mind, that when overborne by the toils of the day, feeling his life to be a burden and a mockery, and that he was a waif upon the world, nothing was more soothing than to go out into the night and behold the stars above; for he could not help feeling that they at least have their appointed courses, and that in them at least there is token of a watchful Overseer. And why could he not learn the lesson from the grass underfoot as well as from the stars overhead? For the same reason that so many of us see God in the heaven above rather than in the earth beneath; for the same reason that gives to the astronomical argument for the being of God a greater force than every other such argument from design; for the same reason that made the poet say of the astronomer above all men, "The undevout astronomer is mad." We require a thing to be removed from us, so that we can speak of it in the third person, before we find in it a God; and the further removed the better. Have you observed the peculiar effect of a still, small voice? Even when your eye is upon the speaker, there is an idea of remoteness about such a sound; and when the speaker is invisible, it seems to come from a weird, unearthly distance. God is not in the tempest, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, as He is in that still, small voice. I; I am not concerned about my

own Freedom, I never think of it, I take it for granted; neither do I see God in my own movements as I see him in the movements of another; I am chiefly concerned for my life, I desire to preserve it, for I feel that I am always becoming, never truly am. I Will is my attribute: why can I never be? Ruled by the instinct of Immortality, I endeavour, by continually passing into activity, to keep myself alive and to reach unto the assurance of life.

Turn to the other proposition. The True, the Beautiful, and the Good are three ideas that fill the whole sphere of the thinkable. Metaphysic proper has but three ideas—God, Freedom and Immortality: and I have said that these lie at the roots of the former three, as the several grounds of their possibility. God is the metaphysical necessity by which alone we solve the mystery of the True—that is plain: through Immortality alone can we conceive the possibility of Good—that also is plain; and both these commonplaces may be left as they are found. If I hazard a third statement, that Freedom is the metaphysical condition under which alone is Beauty conceivable, it will not be so plain. It can be proved, however, and it must be proved the more carefully, as quite another theory has been put forth by Mr Ruskin.

Mr Ruskin speaks with authority; the words come from his mouth like emperors from the purple, and on every question of art they will always go very far.

Shortly, his theory is that in the perception of Beauty we postulate God. To examine his proof in any detail would lead us too far afield; but in the meantime it may be enough to say that this theory of the Beautiful follows naturally from his idea of the object of the painter's art. He regards the painter not simply as an imitator, but also as an historian; imitating with an eye to the history of man or of nature. The historical painter may be the greatest of all painters, but it will generally be allowed that history is not the essential purpose of his art. The essential object of painting is not the True: it is the Beautiful. Mr Ruskin knows this very well, and, in the second volume of Modern Painters, he lays down his theory of the Beautiful. That theory, however, is no analysis of the purely Beautiful; it is the analysis of Beauty as it comes from the hands of the historical painters, and as he finds it in the historical idea of art. In spite of himself, therefore, he mixes up ideas of Truth with ideas of Beauty; always in the latter beholding God. There is a sense in which we can at all times say that Beauty is divine; but that in any strict sense, that in the pure cognition of the Beautiful, we postulate God, can no more be allowed than are allowed the pious dreams of those moral philosophers who postulate the same in morality, tracing all morality to the will of the Almighty. God is the synthesis of Freedom and Necessity. If, therefore, the Deity be conceived as the basis of Beauty, the idea

of necessity must enter into that conception. On the contrary, it can be shown, and is now to be shown, that necessity does not, and that Freedom does, enter into the idea of Beauty.

Freedom in metaphysic is a question that has always hitherto been mooted in connexion with morality, as the postulate of merit or of blame; but it is a question that is at once less and greater than the question of morality. It is less, because it never touches, what is of equal importance, the question of the objective or real goodness of an action. Freedom is the postulate of our merit in performing an action, but it is not (Immortality is) the postulate of the good tendency of that action. It was to this double meaning of all morality that some of the Greek philosophers referred when they described moral excellence by two inseparable epithets —τὸ καλο-κἀγαθόν, the beautiful and good. According as an action, once performed, is destructive or not destructive, leads to death or leads to life, it is bad or good; but its merit, its moral beauty depends upon no such after-result, it depends upon what the action is in itself, the agent being free to do it, or to leave it undone. The question of Freedom, therefore, is less than the question of morality. But it is also greater if there is any Beauty which is not regarded as moral, and if it can be shown that Freedom is the transcendental postulate of its cognition. That there is a Beauty different from what is called moral Beauty may be taken for

granted; and that *à priori* the conception of Freedom is necessary to its perception will not be difficult to show. For Beauty, as distinguished from Truth on the one hand, and from Good on the other, has already (p. 108) been defined to be a thing of present worth, something valuable in itself and for itself. Viewing it only as a present reality, the idea of an origin in the past, an origin out of itself, therefore an origin of necessity is impossible; finding it in the present, and not connecting it with anything prior, we must conceive it as independent, self-originating, free. This is what so many writers appear to mean when they say that always in the Beautiful we must perceive mind. We must perceive the action of a Free Will.

And now, to apply these remarks: if Freedom, if God, if Immortality be severally demanded in our conceptions of the Beautiful, of the True, and of the Good; then, if Beauty, if Truth, if Good be indeed the several centres of the Drama, of the Epic and of the Lyric, it follows that Freedom must be the burden of the Drama, that God must be the burden of the Epic, and that Immortality must be the burden of the Lyric. Is it not so? Is it not admitted on all hands that action is the essential of the Drama; and what is action if not the expression of Freedom? That God is the central thought of the Epic is a view which the critics now-a-days very much overlook; but it has the voice of all antiquity in its favour, as will appear in the sequel.

And is not Immortality the key-note of the Lyric? Look at Pindar, look at Horace; but with them it takes the spurious form of immortal renown. Look, then, at King David: "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Life, dear life, is the chorus of every psalm. The finest ode in the English language is on the Immortality of the Soul.

Naturally, we should go on at once to consider these principles in detail, as embodied in Dramatic, in Epic, and in Lyrical art; but it may be well to give a last look before we leap; it may be well, before plunging into these inward meanings, to show—aloof altogether from art—that the nations of whom we speak had each an eye especially to that one principle which belongs to the art (romantic, classical, or divine) especially cultivated by each; thus affording one more proof of the position already at some length maintained, that modern art is dramatic, that the antique is epic, and that what I have called primitive art is lyrical. In these respective eras, the ideas of Beautiful, of True, and of Good, will be found coming up in a thousand shapes; but if we grapple with them, as Aristæus grappled with Proteus, they will soon return to themselves. For example, sin, by the Christian world, is hated on its own account, being ugly; the Greek, looking back to its origin, saw that it was a blunder, a false step, folly; whereas the Hebrew hated it above everything for the evil conse-

quences that follow in its train. Not that those peoples beheld sin in these lights alone, but chiefly in these lights. Again: the Supreme Being, the same to-day as yesterday and for ever, is the perfection at once of Beauty, of Truth and of Goodness; or, to use the language of Scripture as applied to God manifest in the flesh, He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; words identical in meaning with the former, only that perhaps the first is rather a Jewish than a world-wide name. Jewish indeed, but still true; for Beauty, being a thing of the present, may be regarded as an isthmus between the eternal past and the everlasting future, a passage from cause to effect, the link between Truth and Good, a transition state, a Way. Now those faculties in man which answer to the ideas thus variously expressed, the subjective fittings of those objective realities, are—once more to employ the words of Scripture—Hope, Faith and Love; the first of which is again and for a like reason Jewish. Hope answers to the idea of the Beautiful as a Way, but it is not the word to express fully the mingled feelings awakened by the beautiful, unless, indeed, by implication; for it implies fear, and fear, as in old English, is closely connected with wonder; for which fearful, hopeful admiration we have no single term, although, perhaps, the word nearest to it is *worship*. We worship the beautiful, believe the true, love the good. Is not this worship the feeling of Christendom towards the Deity? as the Greek was full of faith,

and the Hebrew full of love. The Greek had both awe and love, but the most striking feature of his piety was its faith, often running into credulity, as St Paul remarks when speaking of the altar raised to the unknown god. In like manner, amongst the Hebrews and amongst Christians, we trace the joint working of the three emotions; but the first and the last are always in the inverse ratio. The Hebrew was taught to fear, to admire God, but in addressing God it is not fear, it is not adoration that he expresses, it is love—I love the Lord. On Christians there is no duty so often enforced as that of love to God, but it is not love that they express in their prayers and praises, they give glory. This may be seen in every prayer-book, in every hymn-book, that is not Puritanic. The Puritan was a Hebrew in thought, in feeling, in taste, almost in language: his Christian name was Hebrew; and in those warm, frank, outspoken declarations of love to which he is so fond of giving a loose, he is still Hebrew to the life. The Hebrew or Puritanic sentiment may be reduced to the formula—I love Thee; the Christian feeling comes to this —Thou art worthy. According to Scripture symbolism, the uppermost feeling of the daughter of Sion towards God was the unreflecting love of a child towards a father; and the prominent feeling of the Christian Church towards God is represented as that of a bride towards the bridegroom, a love that is conscious, that knows why it loves, in other words, admiration, worship.

While such are the main features of modern, of antique and of primitive piety, and while they show that without an oversight of the other points, the Christian chiefly regards what is beautiful, the Greek what is true, and the Hebrew what is good in the Divine character; the same thing may be seen by a view from the very opposite quarter, namely, from the region of impiety. The antichristian form of impiety appears in "a mouth speaking blasphemy," the dishonour of God; Greek irreligion was infidel, denying the very existence of God, for to a Greek source can be traced all our modern atheism; the impious Hebrew was a hater of God. The first sees nothing adorable in the idea of God, therefore scorns; the second finds no truth, therefore denies; the third is dead to all goodness, therefore hates.

One thing more remains, before proceeding to examine the different kinds of poesy in detail. Let us count our gains; let us make our keys into a bunch, that they may be always at hand, in case we should need them in the following discussions. See this on the next page.

ANALYSIS OF ART.

Nature of the Division.		I.	II.	III.
Subjective,		Law of Imagination. Hope, (worship,)	Law of Harmony. Faith,	Law of Unconsciousness. Love.
Formal,		Dramatic art,	Epic art,	Lyrical art.
Historical,	Time	Modern,	Antique,	Primitive.
	Place	Western,	Grecian,	Eastern.
Historico philosophical,		Romantic,	Classical,	Divine.
Philosophical		Present,	Past,	Future.
		Plurality,	Totality,	Unity.
		You,	He,	I.
		Freedom,	God,	Immortality.
		Way,	Truth,	Life.
		Beautiful,	True,	Good.

CHAPTER II.

THE DRAMA.

WHAT is dramatic? To this query Augustus William von Schlegel has vouchsafed two answers; first, the answer which he thinks would be most commonly given, and which, as things common are unclean to a German, he dismisses with very little ceremony; next, the answer which to him seems best. In this latter it is very forcibly pointed out, what has been pointed out again and again, that action is an essential of the drama. It is the essential spirit of the drama; the matter of the beautiful. But herein is the question still unanswered, inasmuch as in its present place at the head of this chapter, and in the beginning of Schlegel's discourses, it is clearly an inquiry into the form, not into the spirit, of the drama. The common herd acknowledge this in the reply which Augustus William, besides wording it in a very slovenly manner, has, like a true German critic, ever lusting after the show, were it only the show, of originality, treated so cavalierly. And there is another objection to his statement. For, al-

though it be most true that action is an essential of the dramatic, it is not true in his sense of the term. He understands by an action what Aristotle meant by an action; an action having a definite beginning, middle, and end. In this view there would be a great deal of truth were we speaking of a five-act play; but why may not a single scene be dramatic? and a single moment of that scene? A painting, a sculpture, is one moment of a drama; it has no such action, no such forward movement as Schlegel demands in the dramatic; and yet, even when it is the picture of still life, we rightly say that it has or has not dramatic power. What is meant by this, the commonest, use of the term? The question will best be answered by cross-questioning another much abused definition.

All poesy has been defined by Aristotle to be an imitation; the drama one kind of imitation, the epic another, the lyric a third; all art, in short, even music, is mimetic or imitative. Greatly in vogue at one time, the commonplace of criticism, always at hand, and if not always of service, at least always officious, the definition seems now, like a physician in a good old age, to have retired from practice. It is no longer in request. Having professed to embrace all fine arts when it only embraced some, it has been gradually losing its influence, and although often quoted, as many an old doctor is consulted, it is rather in token of respect than with any hope of benefit. For

it is only by an enormous stretch of meaning that a narrative can be called an imitation. Aristotle himself allows (Poetic, xxiv. 7), that in so far as a poet speaks in his own person he is not an imitator; and straining it to the uttermost cannot make the word apply to song, to music, to dancing, or to whatever in art is lyrical: although it was certainly natural enough that a critic living in the most dramatic period of Greek literature should endeavour to interpret art generally by the canon of the drama. In the plain and unforced rendering of the term, dramatic poesy alone is imitative. The Epic and the Lyric can be said to imitate only in so far as they can be said to dramatise.

All dramatic art, then, is imitative, and all imitative art is dramatic. This definition is of such importance to a right understanding of the drama, strictly so called, that we must dwell upon it for a little, showing the connexion between the purely imitative arts of the dramatist on the one hand, of the painter and sculptor on the other.

The whole scenery of a picture may of course be regarded as *dramatis personæ;* as much so as the painted actors of the canvass, or the living actors of the stage. That rock is a stony-hearted villain: that flower is your sister asleep: the brook is a beautiful idiot babbling nonsense. But apart from such generalities, be it observed, that painting is romantic, and that sculpture is classical drama; by which expressions I have already

explained myself as meaning, in the one case, a drama truly such, in the other, a drama conceived in an epic spirit. A. W. Schlegel reports the saying of Hemsterhuys, that the ancient painters were too much of sculptors, and that the modern sculptors are too much of painters. According to the above interpretation, the remark means, that the ancient pictures were epic in their tone, and that modern sculptures are more truly dramatic; that the ancient artists could not save themselves, but whether with the pencil or with the chisel would give a classical or epic meaning to their works, and that the modern artists cannot save themselves, but whether with the pencil or with the chisel give a romantic or truly dramatic meaning to their works. For, as a general rule, in sculpture (that is to say, Greek sculpture), the face is without expression, at least of present feeling, whereas in Christian art it is all in all. Wherever character can be traced in the countenances of Greek sculpture, it is almost always an unmoved character, a character without present energy, but hinting a thousand probabilities of past history, a thousand possibilities of the future; past and future—the symbols of those epic and lyrical tendencies which go to form the classical drama.

The epic tone of sculpture is also shown by the fact, that often a character has no individual expression whatsoever, and is recognised only by some conventional mark attached. "Take from Apollo his lyre," says Sir Joshua Reynolds, "from Bacchus his thyrsus and

vine-leaves, and from Meleager the boar's head, and there will remain little or no difference in their characters. In a Juno, Minerva, or Flora, the idea of the artist seems to have gone no further than representing perfect beauty, and afterwards adding the proper attributes, with a total indifference to which he gave them." Instead of making the statue speak for itself, as all purely dramatic art is bound to do, there is added, to tell the tale, an attribute, as Sir Joshua calls it, an arbitrary sign, a short-hand narrative.

Proving the same thing is another fact, to understand the full significance of which requires some acquaintance with the history of the stage. That history is the same in every country where it is allowed to unfold itself freely, the same whether the drama be of the romantic or of the classical cast. For it stares us in the face, none can overlook, that the great names of the theatre in almost every language are grouped together by threes. Of these names, historians of each theatre say that the first belongs to its morning star, the second to its day star, the third to its evening star; and so far they are right. But they might have seen farther, they might have seen not only that there is a period of rise, of progress, and of decline in every theatre, but also that the nature of that rise, of that progress, and of that decline, is ever the same. So that the three stages through which the drama has everywhere had to pass may be described, the first as full of

lyricism, the second as the most truly dramatic, and the third as highly epic. Thus in Greece, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides: Æschylus, the leader of an army going forth to battle, and as they cross Alps and broad seas in their passage, singing the renown of their forefathers and their own triumphs to come, boasting, shouting, intensely lyrical; Sophocles, the leader of an army engaged, whose works are many, whose words are few, very dramatic in his touches, often, as in the Antigone, quite romantic in his tone; Euripides, leading an army homewards, many wounded, some in rags, all wayworn, and telling the story of their disasters to women who come out to meet them with wailing—altogether of such an epic turn that, whether from choice or from necessity, he begins with a prologue which is a mere narrative to explain the situation of the piece. Perhaps it would not be difficult to show that even in works of the same tragedians, I mean in their trilogies, the same order may be traced. In the trilogy of Æschylus, for example, the Agamemnon is the most highly lyrical, being so full of heraldings and strange forebodings, and the prophetic utterance of Cassandra; the Choephoræ is the most truly dramatic, containing as it does the decisive action of the piece, the murder of Clytemnestra by her son, and that action set forth not as past nor as future, but as taking place now, in the living present; while the Eumenides is the most epic of all, being a recapitulation of

the past, a hearing of the case for and against the murderer, first at Delphi, and then in the court of the Areopagus. It will be more to the purpose, however, to run over the names of those who have followed a like course in the different theatres of Europe. In Spain, there is Cervantes, called the Castilian Æschylus, and who, according to Sismondi, without much lyrical talent gave his best endeavours to render the drama lyrical; Lope de Vega; Calderon. In France, there is Corneille, Racine, Voltaire. In Italy, there is Metastasio, the poet of the opera, like Æschylus in nothing but his lyricism; there is Alfieri; and for a third, if there be a third, Vincenzio Monti. In Germany, the rule is at fault; for although there are indeed three names, Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, and although the two last fill their places well, Lessing affords no good specimen of the drama in its lyrical stage—probably because the German drama was too much of an exotic. In England, owing to the overshadowing power of Shakespere, the lines of distinction are not so marked, but there they certainly are. First of all comes Christopher Marlowe, who died when Shakespere was beginning to be known, but whose lyrical tendency survived in Beaumont and Fletcher; then we have Shakespere himself; last comes Ben Jonson, who, although abundantly lyrical in some of his pieces, sought more than any to give the classical or epic form to our regular drama. This law is of such vital import as a critical

canon (giving, for instance, to our present love of operatic music an interpretation the very opposite of that which is commonly held) that in order to establish it, I have, while really flying over the ground as with seven-league boots, dwelt upon it longer than perhaps my present purpose will justify. It was to be shown that sculpture, dramatic in form, is, like the classical drama, epic in tone. This is borne out by the fact that for subjects chosen from the three Greek tragedians, artists were least of all beholden to Sophocles, and most of all to Euripides.

Once more: that the relationship between painting and sculpture is the same as that between the romantic and the classical drama will be evident by glancing at the value given in each kind to the idea of locality. We have heard so much about the unities of time and place in the drama—righteously kept by the classical, ruthlessly broken by the romantic school—as might straightway lead one to the belief that the former deem time and place of the utmost importance, the latter of very little. There could not well be a greater mistake. The question of time may be laid aside, as not bearing on the point in hand. As for place it would certainly be an exaggeration to say that the Greek dramatists gave as little expression to it as if they were still going the round of the villages in the open cart of Thespis; but it would be nearer the truth than the other view. From at least the time of Sophocles, some attention was

paid to scenery, and it may be safely asserted that the Greeks had not the very strict ideas which the French maintain regarding unity of place; nevertheless, the binding of the drama, in so far as they did bind it, to one spot, was thus far a slighting of place. For if in one place are performed actions suitable to two or three very different localities, the beholder must learn to overlook the characteristics of the scene before him; the scene becomes anywhere, and anywhere is nowhere. This forgetfulness, however, this disregard of place, is not peculiar to the classical drama; it belongs to everything classical, as, on the other hand, romantic art delights not simply in giving a background to its figures, but even in representing that background without any living figures whatsoever. Poems descriptive of the country, the mere country, are found in modern, not in ancient times. To account for this, Twining will have it that the ancients had no such poems, because they had no landscape painting; that they had no Thomson, poet of the seasons, because they had no Claude to paint the seasons. One might as well say, that in Shetland a cow is small because a pony is small, or that the oak will not thrive there because the beech will not thrive. Why are there in Shetland no forest trees at all? Why no Claude in Greece? Campbell, reasonably dissatisfied with the logic of Twining, has, in his life of Thomson, found a cause partly, it would seem, in the civilizing influences of philosophy and of free-

dom (surely forgetting that the Greeks had philosophy abundant as light, and freedom elastic as air); but chiefly in that influence of Christianity which has given such height and depth and length and breadth to our fellow-feeling with all nature, as being the image of the divine. With this remark, if he has not hit the bull's-eye, he has at least not missed the target. Christianity is indeed the cause, although a doubt may arise whether Campbell has fully seized the manner. It is a great deal to know that the spirit of a certain effect agrees with that of its supposed cause, that the spirit of Christianity and of landscape-painting are one; but to be assured that these twain stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect, we should like to know that the one gives shape as well as spirit to the other. This may be shown as follows. It has been stated more than once already, that romantic, or modern, or Christian art, is essentially dramatic. Hitherto I have rested this doctrine rather on historic than on any other grounds, but it may be proved philosophically. Given Christianity, it was to be expected from its very nature that should it ever express itself in art, the art should be dramatic. Without here entering into the proof, tempting though such a discussion be, this hint may be sufficient in the meantime, that Christian art must be dramatic, since it needs no Thomas à Kempis to show that Christian life is in all its outward manifestations an imitative life. As Christianity thus begets dramatic

art, so I may be allowed simply to state here what I hope to prove in its proper place, namely, in handling the language of the drama, (see p. 207) that the dramatic, the first law of poetry, engenders the idea of place. When Shakespere speaks of a "local habitation" given to airy nothings by the imagination, he refers to that work of imagination which he best knew, its dramatic working. Thus it is because of its thorough dramatism that modern art in almost everything it touches, and above all in its imitative touches, brings forward, and dwells upon, and presses home the idea of locality. And thus also, remembering how little statuary has to do with place, it is shown that when the romantic drama is called picturesque, and the classical drama sculpturesque, these very common epithets express not a mere fancied resemblance, but a resemblance founded deep in the nature of things.

These remarks are by no means foreign to the question before us; they bear upon it directly. For if dramatic art and imitative thus blend and tally, it will be clear that to ascertain the ruling idea of the drama, strictly so called, we have a right to obtain evidence from the kindred arts of painting and of sculpture, and to regard that evidence as conclusive.

The arts of imitation aim in the first place at truth; but do they aim at nothing more? If that were indeed all, then truthfulness would be the grand touchstone of success; a correct likeness of that which is most inimi-

table, be it ever so base, would be the highest reach of art. Moreover, truth of this kind is not peculiar to imitation; it is needful to every art of representation alike,—imitative, narrative and musical,—otherwise, dramatic, epic and lyrical. Words do not imitate things or thoughts, but they represent things or thoughts, and must represent them faithfully. Such truth is plainly the means to an end; and in the arts of imitation what is that end? Surely it is the expression of the beautiful. In painting and in sculpture this is evident; and if not so evident in the drama properly so called, it is because the drama is made up of a series of speeches, and speech can be turned to any purpose. A speech professing to be only a life-like copy from nature, may yet very slyly be made to insinuate certain doctrines or certain lessons; and as some men have been endowed with that most marvellous of elfin gifts by which, with every word they let fall, a pearl or a jewel will drop from their lips; moreover, as such will very often be represented in the drama, it must in many cases happen that a person can never open his mouth without giving utterance to weighty truths. But are doctrines thus instilled essential to the drama? I trow not. For looking at dramatic speeches in their true light, as the means of imitating character and life, not as a means of as it were by slanting mirrors throwing opinions among an audience, and far less as a running commentary on the whole play, it will be seen that if they convey any-

thing different in kind from what may be conveyed, however feebly, by dumb show, they swerve from dramatic fitness, or at least are more than dramatic.

These views, it is true, are at variance with the views of Schlegel, and of other Germans,—Herman Ulrici, for one, who has written a book in which he has attempted to draw the corks of all Shakespere's plays, with the intention of giving the world a taste of those moral truths which lie in them, and which, if any such wine there be, certainly ought to be very good, as not having seen the face of day for these two hundred and fifty years. I can only say in defence that although the Germans undoubtedly see further into a millstone than most men, they have, in the matter of the drama, very cheaply earned the reputation of better than Shakespere's countrymen understanding Shakespere. They look at Shakespere, they look at the drama, from a wrong point of view. In his third lecture, Schlegel says, that to find the three kinds of poesy in their purity, we must turn to the Græcian models; and afterwards in the same lecture, having set forth his ideas of the classical drama, the pure idea of tragic and of comic, as he deems it, he refers to the romantic as a medley corrupt. Thus avowedly judging the drama from the stand-point of the epic drama, their views become intelligible, as it also becomes intelligible how and where they are at fault. So long as they speak of the epic drama, they are entirely in the right; but they are so entirely astray

in supposing the epic drama to be the pattern drama, that we are saved the necessity of following them step by step, and proving every step to be wrong. The epic and the epic drama do indeed, in their several ways, expound the riddle of human life: the romantic drama merely exhibits life, its beauty and its grandeur, in shine, in shade, and in shower. The purposes of the stage are none other than the purposes of the easel—a picture of beauty; on the canvass, a picture of lively forms, on the boards a picture of living manners. Not that everything in a picture is beautiful; the beauty-spots of one generation may be the eyesores of another; or perhaps, for the sake of contrast, Raphael may set off Peter and John in the Beautiful gate of the temple by a beggar and a cripple ugliest of the ugly.

If it be said that even a picture may be the means of conveying truth, there is no gainsaying the fact; Mr Ruskin has placed it beyond all dispute in his remarks on the Imaginative Faculty. But Mr Ruskin's conclusions may be fully admitted, while notwithstanding it may be held that truth (by truth meaning something more than mere facts, namely, the exposition, or theory, or philosophy of facts) is not written nor read in a picture by virtue of any imitative or dramatic quality, but by means of some epical element either expressed or understood. Could the ass feeding on withered palm-leaves in the background of Tintoret's Crucifixion betoken to one ignorant of the history, as it betokens to

Mr Ruskin, the cause of the event portrayed? Here is a case in point. Sir Thomas Roe, ambassador in the time of James I. to the court of Delhi, showed to the Great Mogul, amongst other curiosities from England, a picture. It was the picture of a fair and beautiful lady pulling the nose of a swarthy and ungainly monster of a man. You, with your head full of the classics, might have seen that the lady was a Venus, and that she was employing her leisure in snubbing a Satyr. But Selim Schah, having no acquaintance with Greek story, and a little knowledge of English manners, beheld things in a different light: to his eye, the lovely dame was an emblem of a nation in which the women rank above the men, and which was but lately governed by a Queen; the gentleman bore a sort of likeness to the Orientals; and the behaviour of madam expressed the feeling of England to the people of India. The Emperor was enraged, and it was with difficulty that he was made aware of his mistake. He had read not the picture simply, but the picture with a commentary. And a glance at the Exhibition catalogues will show by the quotations, long and short, added to the various titles, that almost every picture of ethical, as also of historic import, presupposes and demands some such scrolls as appear in old paintings, bearing the titles of the different personages, or some such epical prologue as opened the plays of Euripides. It will also be seen, anon, that whatever truth may be conveyed in such or in any dra-

matic shape, must be very trifling when compared with that which every epic can, and the higher epic always does convey. Here, observe how Shakespere describes the drama as a picture intended to unveil all beauty, and to unmask all deformity; "to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."

CHAPTER III.

THE EPIC.

It is told of a great mathematician that he laid down the Paradise Lost inquiring what it proved. Had the poem been any but an epic, one might with a very good conscience join in the laugh hereupon raised against the said mathematician; but being an epic, highest order of narrative, perhaps it will be found that he was not so very far wrong. At least, certain it is that his mathematics could not have been father to the thought, as the same opinion has been held by very different men. What if it were the offspring of common sense? For, in one shape or another, the idea is very wide-spread, and even vulgar. Perhaps the most common form of it is the expectation of finding an allegory in every epic. Bossu, Frenchman though he was, could yet define the epic to be an allegory; and time would fail us to tell of all the hidden meanings that have been discovered in the different epics. According to one interpretation of the Iliad, Agamemnon is the

ether, Achilles the sun, Helen the earth, Paris the air, and Hector the moon. In the Disputationes Camaldudenses, an interesting account of which will be found in the life of Lorenzo de Medici, a couple of days are spent in showing that the Æneid envelops certain leading doctrines of the Platonic philosophy. Tasso believed that the life of the contemplative man is figured in the Odyssey, and in the Divine Comedy, as the civil life is shadowed forth in the Iliad and in the Æneid; and having written his own Jerusalem Delivered, he unfolded in a preface the allegory of the poem, the which whoso willeth may read, but shall not read here. For surely now-a-days a man bears no more liking to these great unwieldy allegories than he has a liking for what Mrs Malaprop has called the allegories on the banks of the Nile. These few examples, however, will serve to show how common it has been to find a hidden treasure in epic poesy. From Callimachus down to Cyril Jackson, it has been the use and wont of the admirers of Homer especially, to say that he is not understood, as though, like the Koh-i-nor, he were "dark with excessive bright," and must be re-illumined with the gas of our own fancies. Hence the sarcasm of Swift, that

> "learned commentators view
> In Homer more than Homer knew."

But while, in thus hunting out allegories, critics have

been as certainly on a wrong scent as was the Cockney, who at a fox-hunt cried Tally-ho to a squirrel, it is equally certain that they have been guided by a sure instinct in looking for profound truth in epic poesy. The fox is there; and it will not be difficult to unearth, it will not take long to run him down, if we can only agree as to what is a fox. What is truth? We tell truth when we represent things as they appear to us; and we tell truth when we represent things as they really are. All art, dramatic, epic, and lyrical, must tell truth in the former sense; it belongs to the epic to tell truth not only in the former, but also in the latter sense. And how are things represented as they really are, but by giving an insight into the mechanism of which the outward show is the result, in other words, by tracing effects to their true causes? In this sense, therefore, to tell truth is to show cause.

Now, it may be stated generally, that a narrative, in giving facts, can and does give at the same time their causes with a constancy and a power that are as rare in the drama and in the lyric as foreign to their natures. In the drama, for instance, a dialogue is carried on, strange things are proposed, odd speeches are made, and you have no means of explanation unless from your foregone knowledge of the speakers, or from that lamentable weakness called an aside. Narrative, on the other hand, not only gives the dialogue, but if need be can also give a clue to the cause: Shylock said so with

such a view, and Antonio, nothing doubting, answered thus. In the lyric, it is true that there is not such an impossibility as there is in the drama of adapting the form to the exposition of cause; but there is the greater impossibility of so adapting its spirit. The notion of cause is derived from our felt power of producing effects, and has therefore in it a self-consciousness that goes entirely against the grain of lyrical feeling.

But further, to unfold the reality of things, it is not enough to make known their more immediate causes; a thorough-going exposition of their nature will push inquiry back to their earliest beginnings, back to the source of all. The highest order of narrative, therefore, will be stamped with this, that in showing the truth of things, it will not be content with pointing out their second causes, but will mount up to the great First Cause. Accordingly, we find that the Deity is systematically introduced into the highest epic. This has been called the machinery of the poem, and has been greatly misunderstood. While the French critics were almost agreed in believing it to be so necessary to the epic, that unless the chief agents, the first movers, of the events are divine, the poem, whatever its other qualifications, is not entitled to rank with the true epic; while they could stick like leeches to the saying of Petronius Arbiter, *Per ambages, Deorumque ministeria, præcipitandus est liber spiritus*, they could yet maintain that the gods must always be heathen. Is it wonder-

ful that other critics should have revolted from this absurdity? that Blair should have regarded the so-called machinery as very ornamental, but by no means essential? and that Lord Kames should have gone to the extreme of asserting not simply that it gives an air of fiction to the whole poem, but even that "the end of an epic poem can never be attained in any perfection, where machinery is introduced"? And yet, with the greatest respect for Dr Hugh Blair, and for Henry Home, Lord Kames, it must be said that, whereas the French critics and the Scottish critics need make little boast of the reasons they severally bring forward, the French have on their side all the truth and all the authorities. The exhibition of the Divine agency, so far from weakening the epic, is the rock of its strength, and so far from giving an air of fiction to the story, gives even to fiction a base of reality. Not for its ornamental beauty, not for the charms of marvel, is the unseen world uncovered; the sight is not a needless luxury; it is a necessity, and so necessary, as to be the one essential out of which every other essential arises. Horace gives the advice,

> Nec deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus
> Inciderit;

good advice in the drama; but in the epic, gods enter for more than to cut the Gordian knots into which the threads of life may be tangled; they enter—nay, when

do they not enter? And, by the way, be it observed, that the advice of Horace was given to dramatists of the epic or classic school; could indeed at his time be given only to such. These naturally called in the assistance of the gods, insomuch that Euripides, the most epic of the Greek tragedians, has been severely handled, because, true to his genius, he called the gods down oftener than the genius of the drama would allow. The drama is content to give the truth of appearance; the epic also gives this, but at the same time lays bare the truth of reality, a truth which not seldom gives the lie to appearance. At least, the epic poet will attempt to lay it bare; and if he is not always successful, if, with Lord Kames, we say that the gods of Homer do no honour to his poems, we must take into account the differences of religious creed. If the Divine agency pointed out by Homer is not always to our liking, it is because we have no settled faith in his gods; if the Divine agency pointed out by Virgil be still less to our liking, it is because not only have we small faith in his gods, but we can also see that Virgil himself had perhaps as little; if the Divine agency pointed out by Milton draws unqualified praise, it is because entirely accordant with our most intimate belief; and if another maker will come, and in keeping with the great truths of Christianity, will point out in whose hands the many reins of power at present lie, he shall be greeted with the heartiest welcome of all. For such, whether as

connected with the Fall of Jerusalem, or the Burning of Moscow, with a story of kings, or a story of peasants, such is the epic to be written hereafter.

I close this chapter by quoting the commencements of the Iliad, of the Odyssey, and of the Paradise Lost; as in their opening lines are struck the key-notes of the greatest epics that we know. By comparing the fifth verse of the Iliad with the seventh of the Odyssey, it may be gathered, which indeed is true, that in the former poem the will of God crushes everything before it, and that in the latter, while the will of God is still almighty, the free will of man is also asserted. In the Paradise Lost, the same problem of

> "Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,"

is proposed. In like manner might be cited the introductions of the Æneid, and of the Jerusalem Delivered; only, this would be unfair to Dante, who in the outset of his poem gives no hint of the object he has in view. Altogether, Dante's manner is strongly marked with lyricism. Not only has he chosen a measure that is constantly rising into the lyrical; his very choice of theme is lyrical. Peering into secrets which the living regard as future, although to the dead they have already come, he seizes upon the last result of human life, the end-all and the be-all, and then he goes back in epic fashion to recount in one case after another the steps that led to this result.

Beginning of the Iliad.

Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος
οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρί' Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκεν,
πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν
ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἑλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν
οἰωνοῖσί τε πᾶσι—Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή,—
ἐξ οὗ δὴ τὰ πρῶτα διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε
Ἀτρείδης τε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.

Wrath of Pelides, Oh Goddess, sing of the wrath of Achilles;
Woe was the havoc! and sorrows unnumbered it heaped on Achaians;
Yea, full many the stalwart spirits of heroes it hurried
Down into Hades, allotting themselves for a prey to the bandogs
And all carrion fowls—(*while the purpose of Zeus was aworking*)
E'en from the time when at first these twain contended and quarrelled—
King among men, Atrides, and, kin to the Godhead, Achilles.

Beginning of the Odyssey.

Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ
πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσεν·
πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα, καὶ νόον ἔγνω·
πολλὰ δ' ὅγ' ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν,
ἀρνύμενος ἥν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἑταίρων·
ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὡς ἑτάρους ἐρρύσατο ἱέμενός περ·
αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετερῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο·

νήπιοι, οἳ κατὰ βοῦς ὑπερίονος Ἠελίοιο
ἤσθιον· αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ.
τῶν ἀμόθεν γε, θεὰ, θύγατερ Διὸς, εἰπὲ καὶ ἡμῖν.

Tell me the much-knowing man, Oh Muse, who to wanderings many
Fared forth, after he wasted the hallowed city of Troja.
Many the men whose towns he beheld and whose manners he noted;
Many the trials which he in his mind on the deep had to suffer,
Seeking the prize of his life and the homeward return of his comrades.
Yet not thus did he save his companions, though never so wishful;
For of their own very selves, by their arrogant folly, they perished,
Senselessly having on beeves of the Daygod, riding in heaven,
Banquetted; wherefore the god robbed them of their day of returning.
Even to us, Oh daughter of Zeus, tell somewhat of these things.

Beginning of Paradise Lost.

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, heavenly Muse, that, on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,
In the beginning how the heavens and earth
Rose out of chaos. Or, if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

And chiefly thou, O Spirit! that dost prefer
Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for Thou know'st: Thou from the first
Was present, and with mighty wing outspread
Dovelike satst brooding on the vast abyss,
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine! what is low raise and support!
That, to the height of this great argument,
I may assert eternal providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LYRIC.

In the drama, outward shows are represented; in the epic, these are represented while the hidden life is also exhibited; in the lyric is represented the inward life alone. Thus it will be seen that in the drama, things are shown as they appear; in the epic, things are shown not only as they appear but also as they are; in the lyric, things are what they seem, a perfect lyric being the perfect expression of feeling, and more than this, a perfect expression of the singer's own feeling. The highest lyric is never imitative. Great lyrics have indeed been written from a dramatic point of view, and perhaps in these romantic times the greater number have been so written. Seldom is Tennyson more dramatic than when he is most lyrical; dramatic in the sense of giving utterance to the supposed poetry of another, as well as in the sense of giving utterance to the supposed feelings of another: so that although he has written no regular drama, though he has reared no single

edifice of this kind to be compared with the palaces of an avowed dramatist, still his various pieces may be arranged, like the various houses of a town, into a mass of building not unworthy of a great dramatist. Here he builds a house for Shelley, here for Wordsworth, here for Coleridge, here for himself, here for the monks, here for the knights, here for the ladies. Such also is the character of most of our lyrical poesy, lyrical in form, imitative in conception; another illustration of the dramatism of Christian art. And it is for this reason that the English have so signally failed in the lyric that you can almost count on the fingers of one hand all the songs in the English language that are worthy of the name, at least, all those written by Englishmen. The English poets, whose stronghold has ever been the drama, where truly they have outshone all rivalry, have the dramatic rage so strong that they dramatize the lyric, singing in every character but their own. Or perhaps I should say the very reverse; that it is not because of their excellence in the drama that they are weak in the lyric; but because they dread the open-heartedness of a lyric that they take refuge in the drama: not willing to sing in their own characters, they will sing for any and everybody else. However this be, it is plain enough that the English lyric is dramatic, that there lies its weakness, and that this weakness is fatal. There are drinking-songs by tee-totallers who trespass in ginger-beer; love-songs by

men to whom love is a jest; home-songs by bachelors who live at their clubs; work-songs by the veriest idlers; hunting-songs by those whose noblest game have been rats and mice, and such small deer; war-songs by gentle ladies; sea-songs by landsmen who get sick in crossing a river; matin-songs by sluggards who never saw the sun rise; vespers by good fellows to whom evening is the beginning of the day; mad-songs by men who are never in a passion; and sacred-songs by men who are never in a church.

Scottish lyrics, on the other hand, express the genuine sentiments of the individual singer; and hence their superiority. The Scottish poets have not been afraid to commit themselves by a show of feeling; the English poets have. Even of such a public virtue as patriotism the Englishman is often very slow to make confession; and yet no one is prouder of his fatherland. After the manner of Balaam the son of Beor, he gives a blessing to nations that he cordially hates; and his love for England gushes forth in words of reviling, if not in some dreadful malison. "England! with all thy faults, I love thee still," says Cowper; and then he goes on to enumerate her faults, without mentioning a single excellence, only hinting at English mind and manners; *still*, he says, as though it were a hard job, he will manage to love his country. How truly English! and how different from the "Rule Britannia," of Thomson; from the "Ye Mariners," of Campbell;

from Scott's burst of enthusiasm when addressing the "Land of brown heath and shaggy wood"; from Beattie, even from Byron, at least when he sings of Scotland, and above all, from Burns. The songs of Burns owe their success to this egotism, this personality, this outpouring of the inmost soul which the English avoid as they do the confessional. In his Essay on Burns, perhaps of all his compositions the most thoroughly beautiful, Carlyle would lay the success of those lyrics to the account of their sincerity; which indeed comes to the same thing. It is the same reason stated less formally, and more, if not too, strongly. Why should a man be charged with insincerity for avowedly expressing the feelings of another, not his own feelings? It is surely enough to say that he is a dramatist,—a bad dramatist, if you will; and that he has utterly mistaken the meaning of a lyric in supposing that it can well be dramatic, or can be other than the perfect expression of the singer's personality. How keenly is this felt in sacred songs! When from hearsay, or from a busier tell-tale, the poem itself, we have any misgiving that it has been written by a man to whom religious feeling is strange; that, in short, it is dramatic in spirit, lyrical only in form, how impossible does it become to sing that song save with the mouth. If it was deemed becoming in the early Italian painters, (dramatists as they were) that they should lead a strictly religious life, much more is it meet that he, whose

hymns would ever carry like doves to the ear of God the messages of men, should so attune his life that his hymns being ascertained to have come from heaven, it may be assuredly felt that thither also they return.

This brings us to the leading idea of the present kind of poesy. The higher lyric is not less religious than the higher epic. But there is this difference betwixt the two, that whereas the epic begins with God, the lyric ends with God. The epic sees in God the first cause of all things; the lyric sees in God the ultimate end of all things. The lyric is an aspiration; its banner has the strange device, Excelsior. It is a prayer for good to come, while it is seen afar like a ship seen by a castaway; or it is the praise of good enjoyed with the assurance that it will last and grow better still; or it is a lament for good flown, with the hope that it may soon return, as birds return in the summer. This in every drinking-song; this in Anacreon as well as in King David; but the higher lyric recognises God as the only and sovereign good, and rightly so. "*Rightly so:* can there be any doubt of the fact?" I do not suppose that there can be any doubt of God's being the only and all good; but it has been doubted whether even the best of men are ever so unselfish as to see in God the last end of their being. What is or ought to be the last or chief end of man? With the Westminster Assembly of Divines we all answer: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever." To

that answer, however, we may give two very different interpretations. Our own happiness, and what is theologically termed the glory of God; our own pleasure and the pleasure of God are one; but which is our ultimate end? Do we seek to please God for the sake of our own happiness? or do we secure our own happiness while endeavouring after God? The latter, I think. For, in exhibiting the third law of pleasure, I attempted to prove, and whether proven or not proven, whether paradoxical or not paradoxical, it is true that man cannot be happy in seeking his own happiness. Man is happy only, then, when he pursues an object apart from himself; and he is happy in God only when he gives himself up to God with utter self-forgetfulness. The higher lyric is therefore justified in regarding God, not our own happiness, as to us the sovereign good. As God is the unfathomable beginning of all things; so likewise He is not only the end beyond which there is no end, but is also accounted such by his creatures.

It will be seen that this idea of God is vitally connected with that of Immortality. The notion of Immortality in fact involves such an idea of God, not as being the Eternal Cause, the lost beginning of all things, but as the end-all and the be-all, an everlasting consequence, effect producing effect, producing effect far beyond ken of human thought. The English free-thinkers of last century felt that they could escape from the bugbear of Immortality, if they could only show to the

idea of God a door out of the universe. Some one replied, Not quite so fast, good sirs! you have not yet got rid of Immortality; since, if chance brought you into this particular world, why then, at death, chance may also send you to the bottomless pit, and keep you there for ever. The retort was fair enough, and a good *argumentum ad homines;* but of course, without resting on the idea of God, we can conceive our Immortality no more than our creation.

The subject of this part is resumed in the latter portion of Book Fourth.

PART SECOND.

THE LANGUAGE OF POESY.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL.

Roscius challenged Cicero to express his ideas by spoken language faster and more clearly than he himself could by gesture; and cases without number will occur to every mind where feeling, in coming to the surface, finds, and ever has found for its expression, means far more eloquent than words. Properly, therefore, the art of poesy should consider any and every expression whereby man has been able to unburden his mind of poetic feeling, whether in so doing he transfers that load to the bosom of another, or with no eye, no ear to witness, launches it on the passing breeze. That woman who, when the Western Highlands of Scotland were visited, as Ireland was about the same time, with

a dearth so great, so awful, that in the memory of man nothing like it had been seen, in the proud spirit of independence by which the clansmen are generally marked, chose rather than ask for the food which had been sent thither by the charity of the lowland towns, to go without nourishment for days together, but at length when overcome by suffering, and almost starved to death, drew nigh to where the almoners were dealing out their bounty, and ashamed to beg, only bared her arm, and lifted it up to show how lank and shrivelled it had become; she, little as she thought of art, was in the same sense in which we may so call any poet who pours forth unpremeditated strains—an artist. Here, we confine ourselves to the artistic employment of words.

That the poet is of imagination all compact every one will readily admit. But in what way his peculiar faculty works, and, above all, how it outwardly betokens its presence in language, have long been mooted. Most people have felt and believed Verse to be the distinguishing trait of poetic utterance; while a few have maintained that verse is quite a secondary matter, and that the true shibboleth is Imagery.

Aristotle seems to say that an Epopee may be composed either in prose (ψιλοῖς λόγοις, bare words) or in metre; and he afterwards roundly declares as much as that a writer—Empedocles—may have the musical gift of a Homer, and yet have nothing else in common which may entitle him to the name of poet. Other

writers regard verse as equally accidental. Sismondi holds, that at first it was merely a help to the memory; and Mr Disraeli, in the preface to his Wondrous Tale of Alroy, while he puts in a salvo for the lower form of verse, commonly called rhythmical prose, says the very same of the higher forms, that they were merely the aids of memory, the offspring of an unlettered age, and that they are no longer needed by us who commit everything to paper. Wordsworth likewise, in the appendix to a very celebrated preface, affirms, that "metre is but adventitious to composition;" and Coleridge says, that it is "simply a stimulant of the attention," which, if true, would render all his other theories very needless, and which is at once seen to be false when placed beside the parallel theory of a French writer, Cerceau by name, who maintained that the inversion of its grammar is all that distinguishes the verse from the prose of his countrymen, and that this inversion is but a stimulant. Even those who, like Archbishop Whately, consider verse to be an essential of poesy, have never shown on satisfying grounds why it should be so; they have never shown the necessity by which the expression of poetic feeling becomes metrical.

Had we to choose between Verse and Imagery, the former is certainly the more worthy badge of a poet, and it is also the more searching test; because while imposing imagery can be supplied to any extent by mechanical rule, if not by native impulse, none but a

true poet can send forth a strain that will "vibrate in the memory." No one can move his lips in the heat of inspiration without moving harmonious numbers. Every thought that he breathes will draw music from language as from a wind-harp, else it is not the breath of heaven, nor of heavenly powers. When the answers of the Priestess of Apollo were couched in prose, as they sometimes were, and from the time of Pyrrhus always were delivered, it was a proof that inspiration had departed from the Pythia. And should any man who is a poet divorce his thoughts from music, and be content habitually to send them forth in prose, he hath sundered what God hath joined. If Carvilius Spurius was known and hated at Rome as the first of all the Romans who divorced his wife, and who divorced her for being childless, be assured that Plato, the first on record who forsook poesy for prose, would be remembered in like manner, had he not otherwise redeemed his fame, and had we not been averse from visiting literary sins with the indignation due to moral offences.

But in truth we are not called upon to make a choice between the two. Both have their rights, both are to be accepted. Verse and Imagery, the sacramental mysteries of poesy, are twin-born. They come to us together; we must keep them and explain them together.

The three laws of poetry take part in the genesis of both these forms; but the first law takes the chief part. Since poetry passes through the imagination to and

from the soul of man, it is perfect or imperfect according as it adapts itself more or less to the forms of that faculty. But since the imagination is a copy of sense, its forms must be those of its pattern. Now, according to Kant's analysis, the leading forms of sense, under which everything is perceived, are Time and Space. These, therefore, belong to the imagination. It follows, that whatever comes naturally and freely from the imagination will be, and that whatever would touch it powerfully must be, moulded by these forms. Poesy therefore, or, since speech is a sensuous faculty, we may say language generally, as it nears perfection, will own these forms more or less entirely. It will bring out the idea of Time by the use of timed or measured words, and it will fulfil the idea of Space by means of imagery.

CHAPTER II.

VERSE.

THE idea of time is so very simple, that it seems impossible to find for it any but a verbal explanation. A very common way, indeed, is to speak of time and think of space. Thus we say, length and space of time; thus also, Hobbes, with his wonted self-confidence, attempting to outdo Aristotle in a definition of time, says, that it is "the phantasm of before and after in motion," (Elements of Philos. Chap. 7), thereby defining space quite as well as time. It is equally baffling to explain how time is expressed well and fitly by an orderly succession of beats; yet we cannot doubt the fact. We also know, that whether we give way freely and unconsciously to present excitement, or attempt to recall past feelings or actions as vividly and perfectly as possible, we always have recourse to modulated expressions. Thus a child will dance for joy, and when learning his lesson will unwittingly swing his body to and fro, in order to bring his most powerful faculty—the imagi-

nation—into play. If a man speed in his labour, he begins to hum a tune; if his thoughts are very livelily engaged, he will beat time with his fingers or with his feet. In the north of Scotland there was a lady, now there no longer, who, unable to kneel down, was always known to be at prayer when she patted on the table with her hand. There also, as among the Quakers in England, prayer, when it becomes fervid, rises into a low and not unpleasing chant; which indeed is none other than that intonation, sometimes sinking into a mere whine or twang, for which the Puritans were of old, and the Puseyites are now remarkable, the former in the use of improvised, the latter in the use of premeditated, litanies. The same practice may be observed in addresses to man as well as in addresses to God. Evelyn tells us (1665, Feb. 24) that the well-known Dr Fell—the same who was hated with some pretensions to rhyme, but with none whatever to reason—delivered his discourses in blank verse; a report which, with some allowance for tare, is credible enough. For, while many speeches are delivered that keep no time, the voice of an impassioned speaker, however harsh and broken its first utterance may be, will soon flow into waves and roll along in ever-swelling billows—(which the Greeks acknowledged and acted on so fully, that sometimes they went the length of scanning a remarkable sentence); and a poor speaker will mechanically try to reach the same effect by lifting his

voice into an unchanging sing-song, ding-dong, that might easily be mistaken for an attempt at blank verse, the blank verse, at least, of the drama, which, as the Paradise Lost was not published till two years after Evelyn made the entry in his journal, was the only kind at that time known. Perhaps it is not too much to say, and Coleridge, I believe, has said something to the same effect, that the music of any speech is a test of its value. The most seemingly nonsensical music that I can think of, is The House that Jack built; yet, on looking more narrowly, we shall there find a great truth, how nothing in the world stands apart by itself, brought down to a child's understanding by tracing the links which connect the rat of one parish with the cock of another. And the music, such as it is, agrees in character with the sense which it conveys. No single line strikes the ear, or hits the fancy; but as a whole the effect is so pleasing, that not the most learned pundit of us all can desire it to be forgotten.

Everything we do, then, everything we think of, takes or has taken place in time; and the imagination lays hold of that fact in whatever it seizes. Time we represent to ourselves as an orderly succession of some kind. Although we reckon it by suns, moons, tides, and other objective standards, its real value with every man is subjective, what is long to one being short to another; and this value is found in the more or less rapid succession of thought. The measure of time,

therefore, which the imagination will provide, is not a uniform beat, like that of a clock, but one like the pulse, varying according to circumstances. Even this, however—this throbbing—gives but a faint semblance of the manner in which ideas of time are conveyed by the modulations of verse. Time is noted by something more than the number and the length of pauses and of sounds; it is unconsciously and very subtly, but not the less truly, noted by the quality of sounds as determined by accent. Accent depends on the sharpness of a tone.

Mr Guest stops us here: he says (English Rhythms, B. I., Chap. IV.) that it depends on no such thing, but on increased loudness of tone. According to his own showing, however, the rhythm, that is, the music of English verse depends upon accent; and therefore, if the essential of accent be an increase of loudness, it must follow that the melody of English verse depends on the relative loudness of its sounds—a camel not to be swallowed. Mr Guest allows that in almost every instance there is with the accent an increased sharpness of tone; but two reasons, formidable as those lions that guarded the palace Beautiful, prevent his going further —prevent his believing sharpness of tone to be the essential of accent. The first lion roars in broad Scotch, and when you take the weaver's word, and say, "Let him roar again, let him roar again," the second lion begins to "aggravate his voice," and "roars you as

gently as any sucking dove"—in a very whisper. The latter says: "In a whisper there can be neither gravity nor sharpness of tone, as the voice is absent; yet even in a whisper the rhythm of a verse may be distinctly traced;" ergo, the rhythm cannot depend on sharpness. When Mr Guest says that the rhythm may be traced, he means that we may catch not only the order of the accents, which is very true, but also their nature, which is not true. In maintaining this, he begs the whole question. The best part of rhythm is not to be found in a whisper, whose feeble imitation is indeed no more to be compared with the utterance of the voice than is the orderly array of sounds which a girl elicits, when, according to wont, she plays upon some imaginary key-board on the table, to be compared with the same array of sounds when she plays it upon the real key-board of the pianoforte. Next, hearken to the Scottish Lion: "The Scots give to the accented syllable a grave tone. Now, if our English accent consisted merely in sharpness of tone it would follow, that in the mouth of a Scotchman our accents would be misplaced. This, however, is not so: the accents follow in their proper place, and our verses still keep their rhythm, though pronounced with the strange intonations of a Fifeshire dialect." It is about as difficult to say a verse well, as to sing it well; there is in either case the same bright stream of sound, but flowing with less of rapidity, and less of gurgling, in the one case than in the other.

Poets—James Thomson among the number—have been unable to repeat their own compositions: the Troubadours often engaged a Jongleur to recite their chanzos and their sirventes. Yet Mr Guest will judge of English verse from the way that children read it; for certainly, neither in England nor in Scotland—not even in the East Neuk o' Fife—will any man with two ears read with only one accent; he will employ both the one and the other according as the sense requires. This, however, makes nothing against the reasoning: it only supplies a weightier fact. But the reasoning, if it be worth anything against the common theory of sharpness, is worth as much against his own theory of loudness. For, if attention be paid to the ticking of a clock, a very marked accentuation will be discovered. Now, it is well known, that we hear the stress not always when the pendulum reaches the same end of its arc, but at this end, or at that end, we hear it, according to the moment when we begin to listen. This cannot be the result of increased loudness. The accent is changed, while no change whatever has been wrought in the sounds. It must, therefore, be ideal. It is an ideal stress given, not to increased sharpness, nor to increased loudness, nor to increased length of sound, but to a change—of which kind we cannot say from the above experiment, yet is there no reason to doubt the common opinion, that it is to a change of sharpness. It is not, however, to be forgotten, that difference of sharpness

will also affect the loudness and the length of tones. An acute sound is naturally louder than a grave one; a grave one is longer lived.

When we set out on this petty skirmish, from which now a retreat must be sounded, it was on the point of being shown that verse can impress ideas of time in another and finer manner, than by the length and number of its syllables, and of the pauses between. A verse depends upon the order and the nature of its accents. There is no good ground for withstanding the common doctrine, that accent depends on the relative sharpness of tones. Their sharpness depends upon time; upon the number of their vibrations in a given time. And thus at bottom, music is sound expressing divisions and infinitesimal subdivisions of time. These we may not be able to trace knowingly; but they have their effect.

Such, then, is metre in its simplest form—time heard. And it will show the importance of metre to remark, that time is heard rather than felt in any other way. It is noted by the ear more and better than by any other sense, while space, again, is best and chiefly marked by the eye. It matters nothing whether these powers be acquired or inborn. Let Berkeley's Theory of Vision, which has hitherto been a law so cruel to the dogmatic, and a gospel so pleasing to the sceptical philosophers of this country, stand fast as ever, and let Sir David Brewster, who has so boldly and so powerfully assailed it, be deemed in the wrong; it is never-

theless true, that now, at least, however it may have been with each of us originally, time is mainly heard, and space mainly seen. It is, indeed, on this account, that sight and hearing stand apart from the other senses. All their revelations have a greater outness, a greater sensuous reality, than can otherwise be found; and are truly entitled to the name of perceptions, whereas those of the other senses very seldom amount to more than sensations. For why? Because these two of our five wits have grasped most firmly those forms upon which sensuous reality depends—time and space. But while these twain stand aloof from the other senses, and above them, there is also a wide difference between the parts which they themselves perform in art. As in Sculpture only the idea of space is wrought out, so in Music only that of time; and as in Painting both space through form and time through colour are depicted, greater prominence, however, being given to the former, so in Poesy, ideas both of space and of time are conveyed, but especially of the latter. There time is presented, space is only represented to the mind. Metre appeals to the ear, imagery appeals only to the mind's eye. This will show the relative importance of the two.

In now turning to examine how the second law of poetry, the law of harmony, tells upon versification, we are at once met with an inquiry which deserves our attention.

The imagination is sometimes called the mind's eye. Though this be a narrower term, including but one class of mental representations, and requiring to be supplemented with others, such as mind's ear, it is the widest of the kind, and is here alluded to as a proof stamped in the language, if any proof be needed, that the imagination is chiefly employed with ideas derived from sight. But metre is addressed to quite another sense. How then comes it that concords, with which the mind's eye has chiefly to do, should be expressed by concords which the bodily ear can alone perceive? We advance a step to the answering of this question by stating its converse—how is it that we can think and speak of music as *brilliant?* In the Reliques of Ancient Poetry there is a song to the Lute, which both for its own sake, and for the mention made of it in Romeo and Juliet, every reader of Percy must have carefully conned. When Peter in the play catches at one of the lines, and inquires why *silver sound?* why *music with her silver sound?* almost every one will feel that the phrase is rather of a puzzle. Some perhaps will side with Simon Catling when he replies—Because silver hath a sweet sound; and if another who knows well that an answer may be shallow, and yet go to the bottom, should notwithstanding declare that this does not so much as skim the top, but that, in good sooth, the word stands for *shining*, and the line means *music silver-bright of sound*, they will perhaps deem his an-

swer as lame, without the excuse of being a tithe so pleasant, as those of Hugh Rebeck and of Peter himself, who say that it is used because musicians sound for silver, and seldom have gold for sounding, and will think it still worse than the silence of Mr Soundpost. But what if it turn out that such is the true answer? Bacon asks if the quavering upon a stop in music be not the same as the playing of light upon water, and gives this as an instance of those resemblances in nature (to be more fully described hereafter, in treating of simile) which are something more than resemblances, which are in fact identities, the same foot-prints of nature traced in different soils. No one who has ever found that when looking at anything shiny—say when his eye is dazzled by a bit of glass far afield giving back the sunbeam, he feels as though his ear were at the same time struck with some shrill and piercing cry, will be at a loss for Bacon's meaning; nor will he fail to enter into that olden faith which heard music in the stars, and beheld the lord of music in the lord of day. And now the effects of light are no longer explained by the Newtonian theory of rays, but by the Huyghenian theory of waves; the same theory that explains the effect of sound. Assuming therefore that the shows both of light and of sound affect us according to the selfsame laws, may we not hereby understand how sight and hearing should be so connected in our minds that we speak of the one as of the other, and record

the agreeableness of visionary delight by the harmonies of audible?

In examining how the law of harmony acts upon metre, we must beware of a mistake to which we are very liable. We are to distinguish between harmony and the love of harmony. The harmony of which mention has been made is a concord subsisting between the subjective and the objective, between the mind and the objects of its thought: the love of harmony is a delight in the discovery of such or of any concord, of the concord among sounds, or of that between sound and sense. When by the first law of poetry, that is, by a necessity of the imagination, a timed or tuned expression is required, the nature of the concord struck between self and unself (in plain English, the sense) will determine a particular movement in the verse, and be satisfied with nothing else; but the love of harmony is pleased with any and every music, now with namby-pamby, again with the Alexandrine, and it ensures nothing, unless to insist that the connexion between the inward concord and the outward melody shall be well marked, thus only enforcing what is otherwise imperative. It will be found, indeed, that those who like Aristotle refer verse to the love of melody, make it the hireling, or at best the adopted child of poesy, and not its true offspring. In a highly cultivated age, the mere love of melody—a musical ear—will no doubt produce many a song, but it is not the original cause of song

any more than is that love of feasting—that dainty palate—which will induce an epicure to eat much and often, the original cause of eating.

It may be stated generally, that the effect of the present law upon the time or tune engendered by the first will be to prolong and repeat the strain, so as to impart its own self-complacency to the outward form. This remark may appear vague, but if accepted in the meantime, it will be rendered more definite in the sequel. It may also be stated that, although rhyme of itself be accidental, yet when it does come into play, it is at this stage. By rhyme is here meant any chime or assonance that makes a rhythmical movement more marked, and especially that marks its close—the dactyl and spondee, for instance, which closes the hexameter line, and which also closes the Sapphic stanza.

There is one way of linking metre to the present law which is in favour with some, which is indeed a very good way so far as it goes, but which is an utter failure when, as commonly happens, it claims, in virtue of this success, to be the only true and perfect theory of versification. Metre is regarded as an obedience to, and the expression of, law as law. Bacon regards it as a curb or shackle where everything else is riot and lawless revelling; Wordsworth regards it as a mark of order, and so an assurance of reality, needed in such an unusual and irregular state of the mind as he takes poetry to be; and Coleridge would trace it to the

balance struck between our passions and spontaneous efforts to hold them in check. The working of the law as thus understood may be seen pretty clearly in Keble. He and those with whom he is supposed to think, speak and act in common, dwell so fondly on the duty and advantages of not obeying laws found in or by ourselves, but of yielding to the yoke laid on, and following the path pointed out by motherly and ghostly hands, that it is fair to conclude they both find the benefit, and are in the habit, of so doing. And this very thing, the benefit as well as the habit, we see in Keble's verse. For whenever he invents a measure of his own, it is almost sure to be in itself uncouth, and to be the bearer of thoughts either commonplace, or very quaint; but, on the other side, when the metre is ready made to his hand, acknowledged and accustomed, it is for the most part gifted with a large dowry of those charms that have endeared his lyrics to thousands upon thousands in our country, and have rendered his name a household and a hearthold thing to those even who on some points are very far from seeing with him eye to eye.

The theory as thus far explained may be regarded as part and parcel of the second law of poetry; it is that *rest*, which was described as belonging to the second law of pleasure, stilling the *motion* of the first,—rest in the midst of motion. We shall obtain a more thorough enunciation of the same idea under the third law, which

indeed is but a development of the second. In this explanation I must take the freedom of attaching metaphysical to physical ideas. Rest and motion are physical conceptions; but as we are to determine the nature of this combined rest and motion, we must descend to physical ideas that are still more definite. Licuit, semperque licebit.

When the mind in poetic mood is said to work unconsciously, it is not meant that self-consciousness is utterly extinct. If so, we were dead or in a swoon. We are always tied to self-consciousness and unable to escape, but we fly away from it as far as we can. Our thoughts would fain break away from time and wander through eternity, would leave the earth and soar through the unbounded heaven, would forget self altogether and be lost in the Divine. But because we cannot do so entirely; because, being held by a chain, there are limits beyond which we cannot go, if our minds on reaching these limits still retain the activity which carried them thither, the path which they describe—to speak mathematically—must needs be circular. (Perhaps it was in some such sense as this that Lorenz Oken defined self-consciousness to be a living ellipse.) And what the effect? The centrifugal force wherewith the mind rushes forth into the objective, acting on the centripetal force of self-consciousness, generates the circling numbers, the revolving harmonies of poesy—in one word, a roundelay. Thus the fine mechanism of verse goes

round, wheel upon wheel, and wheel within wheel. Clement of Rome beautifully says, that the Spirit of God is sent forth (ἵνα ῥυθμήσῃ τοὺς αἰῶνας) to set the rhythm of the ages; and, in like manner, it may not irreverently be said, that poets have come from God to attune the Times to the time of their verse. In adjusting the wheels of their song, they construct the timepiece of history, the horologe of centuries.

The above view will be greatly misunderstood, and the reader will therefore be likely to reject it, if he supposes that it is put forth as an independent theory of versification. It is but a further development of that propounded at the first (p. 157.) On its own footing, indeed, it would be as lame as theories that have already been found wanting. Bacon speaks of government, Wordsworth of regularity, Coleridge of balance, and I have referred to *rounds* produced by a strong impulse acting on the furthest edge of consciousness. Granting that such laws are evolved in the expression of poetic feeling, how and why should it be the government, the regularity, the balance, the revolution, of time? Why is not Bacon satisfied with the government of grammar? If orderly phrase be a proof of reality, as Wordsworth has it, why is not ordinary phrase the strongest proof? If the expression must be balanced, as Coleridge will have it, why not be content with the seesaw of antithesis, of which he himself, speaking of the style of Junius (Table Talk, 3d July 1833,) declared

that it amounted to a sort of metre? And if there must be a circling harmony, why will not a mere burden or refrain do? or why not any egg-shaped piece of writing, such as used to please the later Greek and the earlier English poets? Almost all critics have allowed that the expression of poetry must go by measure, but they have not explained how and why by a measure of time. This I have already endeavoured to show under the first law.

But if that endeavour have been successful; if imaginative activity be the true fount of verse, I may not unreasonably be asked to point out more definitely what the other laws have to do. In poetic, as in all, pleasure, there are not strictly speaking three laws, but three out of and in one; not a triumvirate, but a trinity: Verse and Imagery are the Adam and Eve which they jointly create. It was in order to give this fact its full weight that I have as yet spoken so very vaguely of the particular effects due to the different laws. The time is now come to distinguish between the laws; to treat of them no longer in common; to give each its due; to divide the spoil. For although the second and third laws are merely developments of the first, it is to be expected that the metre begotten of the first will by them be correspondingly developed. And this is the case. Each law has a work more peculiarly its own. There are three; and so there are three stages of verse,

each having a law to which it stands peculiarly indebted.

The simplest element of verse is commonly called a foot, and so called by a metaphor taken from the art of dancing. For, as we sometimes say in English, He writes such or such a hand, we can conceive it said, He dances this or that foot. A foot then is the arrangement of two or more syllables into a dancing step, which may be either singly repeated or followed by others in every variety. This is mere rhythm, the beginning and the only essential of verse, which bears traces of the three laws it is true, but chiefly of the first, being for the most part expressive of time.

This rhythm, however, although it be the whole essence of verse, is capable of a higher form, as yet being nothing beyond what is called rhythmical prose; and this it receives from the second law. The feeling of harmony, thereby meaning not our sense of the harmony dwelling among sounds or aught else that is objective, but a sense of the affinity between any objective and our subjective being,—this complacent feeling will have an expression equally self-satisfied, a rhythm so delighted in itself as to return constantly, with whatever variations. Hence the second stage of verse, wherein what was formerly but a rhythmical flow or current takes the form as it were of waves, one regularly following another. If, without metaphor, one were to say that it takes the form of *lines*, he would perhaps be un-

derstood; dimly however; for so long as prevails the absurd practice of making one line run over into the next, as in blank verse, the term cannot apply. To avoid this ambiguity, perhaps it may be allowed to employ the word *bar* as a general name for the dance or motion of verse between pause and pause—that is, between the chief pauses, which in rhyme most often are placed, as they ought to be, at the end of each line, and in blank verse are placed, where they ought not to be, in the body of the line. In such bars—repeating a melody which, with endless and often great variations, will ever be recognised as the selfsame—we trace, as before, the working of the three laws, but now we find the second as most active.

Higher still, in the lyrical strain, highest reach of poesy, the chief part is played by the last law, the law of unconsciousness. Staves or stanzas, the regular revolutions of song, the third and furthest stage of versification, are thence evolved in the manner described a few pages back. Thus, then, the first law of poetry begets a melody made up simply of feet, and commonly called rhythmical prose; the second begets a melody made up of bars; and the third a melody which is made up of stanzas.

The stanza has just been mentioned as belonging to lyrics and only to lyrics, the poetry of poetry: hint of another doctrine here to be unfolded very briefly. For

the sundry developments of the poetic law not only have the different developments of verse which I have been describing, but each also has a style of poesy peculiarly its own into which it carries its own versification. It has already been shown that at bottom there are but three kinds of poesy, Dramatic, Narrative, and Lyrical, and that these correspond with the three laws of poetry, the Drama with the first law, the Epic with the second, and the Lyric with the third. It is furthermore true, and has now to be made good, that each of these kinds adopts the versification belonging to its own poetic law, that the Dramatic metre is made up simply of feet, that the Epic is made up of bars, and that the Lyrical is made up of stanzas. This were easy, it would indeed be quite plain, if in every poem flowed unmixed the blood of its kind; but, even as it is, the task will not be difficult.

And first of the Drama. No one acquainted with the lyrical descent of the Greek play will look to see there an expression purely dramatic; yet, of the Tragic Trimeter, Aristotle (Poetics, IV., § 14), says, that it is the most conversational of measures, familiar discourse often running into such iambics, as in English we often talk blank verse. In what is said to be the first regular tragedy of modern times, the Sofonisba of Trissino, while lyrical metres are by no means banished, the dialogue is chiefly conducted in versi sciolti or blank verse; and in the works of the greatest Italian dramatist,

Alfieri, the verse, in order to shun any approach to the bar of epic, or to the stanza of lyrical composition, becomes often as abrupt and harsh as the veriest prose. French verses are never much raised above prose, even in their most lyrical strain, far less in the drama. And with regard to the German drama, Schlegel complains that Lessing was but too successful in ridding it of all versification. For decisive examples, however, we must look to the purely romantic drama, whose chief theatres are those of England and of Spain.

It ought to be mentioned in the outset, that too much stress must not be laid on any favourable fact to be found in the metre of the Spanish drama, inasmuch as that earliest form of their verse, eight-syllabled asonantes, chiefly employed in the drama, is also employed in every department of their poesy. Moreover, the Spaniards, less however than the Italians, seem to have had very little scruple about using lyrical measures, whether in the epic or in the drama. The ottava rima, invented by Boccaccio, and kept in its true place by us, who employ it only in such works as Anster Fair, Whistlecraft, Beppo, Don Juan, and by those Italians who, like Ariosto, and more than Ariosto, sport with their subject, is the epic metre of Tasso in Italy, that also of Camoëns in Portugal, and is used by the Spaniards not only in their epic, but even in their drama. Still, when taken together with other facts, as the practice of the English stage, it is very instructive

to observe that, according to Ticknor (Period I., Chapter VI.), the great mass of the true Spanish drama is written in the eight-syllabled asonante, a measure so nearly allied to prose, that into it, with little change of form, have been turned many parts of the old chronicles, and Sarmiento has undertaken to show how Spanish prose, from the twelfth century downwards, often glides into it unaware. If we now turn to him who stood ever truest to the ideas of the drama, we shall learn still the same lesson. Pope, referring to the folio edition of Shakespere, published seven years after his death, by the two players Heminges and Condell, says, "Prose from verse they did not know, and they accordingly printed one for the other throughout the volume;" and after all that has since been done to settle the text, there is still, in many passages, doubt and room for doubt. It was the late Dr Maginn, if I have not forgotten, who, in one or two places, attempted to build the rhythmical prose into the blank verse of Shakespere, maintaining that in many other places a little care would do the same. But in truth, while there can be no objection to the labours of Dr Maginn and the later editors of Shakespere, there is, at the same time, on this score, no ground of complaint against the original editors. Both are in the right. The former maintain that, in the language of Shakespere, there is a melody that entitles it to be regarded as verse, and the latter have felt that, whatever be its melody, it is not always of that order

which belongs to verse commonly so called. As the verse often seemed to them like prose, the prose often seemed to them like verse. These differences of opinion would alone afford a key to the nature of his verse, if we could no otherwise obtain one. In the more strictly dramatic parts, the melody of that metre, wonderful though it be, is not self-repeating, is not made up of equivalent bars; it is made up of feet. This is most commonly seen in the beginning of a speech, where it is most required for the sake of contrast: as the speeeh moves on, it often takes a narrative metre, and not seldom ends in a lyrical. How different does the verse of Shakespere read from Milton's mighty line, where the bars, although not of equal length, as in blank verse they seldom are, yet are generally of equal weight, and you are made to feel of a surety that you are in among the billows of always the same great stream, till at last, from their rhythm alone, you can tell them out of a thousand. Not thus do we recognise Shakespere; we know him by his feeling, his thought, his imagery, his words, but seldom if ever by the movement of his verse. And how indeed should it be so? The individuality of the speakers, and of all their sayings, demands not only in their speeches as a whole, but also, in a lower degree, in every speech, entire individuality; a demand which it is not in the bar, far less in the stanza, to fulfil, and which can only be satisfied with metrical prose. *Prose*—that is the common, but it is not the proper

word; for whatever is metrical, however it may be written, is truly entitled to the name of verse. The habit however of calling by the name of verse only those measures which rise into regular bar and stanza, has led to what very strongly confirms the foregoing view. Together with a feeling that truly dramatic measures, however they may be written, neither do nor ought to rise so high, it has led men to rank Plays apart from Poems, the Plays from the Poems of Shakespere.

That the bar is for Narrative, the stanza for Lyric poesy, is more easy of proof. Everybody will allow that nothing short of the stanza is fit for the Lyric. In the earliest age of poesy, the lyrical, the measures are by far the most intricate and circular; and in all ages there are very few cases, and none of importance, where the lyric has taken any form but that of the stave. It has only therefore to be shown that the bar, and the bar alone, not the stanza, belongs to Narrative.

Can such a statement stand? it will be asked. How can it stand in the face of known facts, the host of ballads, the ottava rima, the Spenserian stanza? These are undoubtedly well known facts; but it is also a stubborn fact, that in all such measures we have at least the lyrical twang; and it is a fact enough to overwhelm all others that, in what are acknowledged to be the four great masterpieces of narrative poesy, Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Milton make use of the bar alone. As a

bar, and as a medium of narrative, the hexameter is the most perfect of the measures used by these poets. It has certainly its failings: of a most glaring defect the reader may judge from the reckoning made by Professor Trench, that in Latin about one word in every eight which it might otherwise be desirable to employ, is excluded by rules of prosody from this and from all the higher forms of verse; a fault, however, that in English hexameters, on account of their accentual structure, is not felt. But as it is the most perfect single line with which we are acquainted, being capable of vast variety, while it is always the same and of the same length, and shutting (save in the rare instances of the spondaic hexameter) with the same chime to warn us of its close; so it will be difficult for the readers, even of Dante and of Milton, to impeach the verdict of Aristotle, that Homer, who has hitherto been unrivalled for clear straightforward narrative, has chosen the very fittest and the very best means of attaining his end. The bars of Dante and of Milton are less perfect; but it is remarkable that they err in opposite directions, and can thus by their very error be shown strikingly to strengthen the foregoing statements. The terza rima of Dante is always becoming, without ever being, a stanza—a consequence to be expected from the lyrical tendencies of the poet, of his times, and of his country. On the other hand, the blank verse of Milton has often that irregularity of rhythm which be-

longs not to an epic, but to the drama. This is perfectly explained by the fact, that the poem was first conceived and handled as a drama, and even in its epic shape has not seldom a dramatic air.

This view will not be weakened, but rather confirmed, if we examine what other important measures are used in English narrative poesy. Although some of them may look like stanzas, because so written, they have not always the effect of such. The only measures, beside blank verse, that have had anything like success in English story, are the common ballad metre, the eight-syllabled rhyming couplet, and the heroic distich; all having the form of a stanza, and the same form, too; for although the ballad metre of which we speak is commonly written in four lines of eight and six syllables alternately, it is for the most part only a rhyming couplet, each line of fourteen syllables, and having a cæsural pause—or what Sir Philip Sidney has called a breathing-place—generally after the eighth. All three, then, have the form of couplets. George Puttenham, in his Art of English Poesy, maintains that every stanza should have not less than four verses. Without going so far, it may be truly said that a couplet is the very lowest form of stave, and so weak that much cannot be required to weaken it still further, so as to make it a stanza rather to the eye than to the ear. In the ballad metre, for instance, each line of the supposed couplet is often so complete in itself, the rhyme having

so little connective power, that the whole strain reads like a succession of single lines; and again, in the eight-syllabled metre, the latter line of the stanza very often follows so hard upon the former, that the whole couplet reads like one line. In the ballad metre, the lines are too long, in the other, too short, to bring out the effect of a stave. And other ways there are of undoing the effect in these metres; ways which he who runs may discover, and which therefore need not any longer keep us from dealing with a far more important couplet—the heroic.

The distich so called has lines neither too long nor too short, and is indeed the most perfect stanza having so few. Yet is it no stanza as employed by Chaucer, the earliest of our story-tellers who was a master. In the Riding Rhyme, almost every line is a self-sufficient whole. It is a trifle to see a full stop again and again after the first line of the distich: an entirely new paragraph is often made to begin with the second. Nothing stanza-like here, and still less will be found after Chaucer to the time of Waller and Dryden. Till then, it became the fashion to run the lines into one another after the manner of blank verse, as Dryden himself did when he employed this measure in the drama. When he employed it in narration, it has more the effect of a stave; but this effect is deadened in various ways; as by the use of Alexandrines, and again by lengthening the couplet

into a triplet, so frequent in what Pope deemed the correctest, and Johnson the maturest, specimen of his verse, the Hind and Panther. In the hands of Pope, the measure is doubtless a thoroughgoing stanza, the couplet being generally complete in itself, and each line without the other being about as forlorn and helpless as would be the single blade of a scissors; but with all its beauties, whether as employed in the Rape of the Lock, or in what has well been termed Pope's Homer, I am not giving my own judgment, but the settled judgment of the present century, as established by practice, when I say that the couplet of Pope is not a narrative couplet, and that whatever success may have attended the use of it has been owing far more to the skill of the artist than to the worth of his instrument. Few poets have been gifted with a finer taste than Samuel Rogers. In that class of his poems for which it is difficult to find a name, and which corresponds with what are called the moral poems of Pope, he has not swerved much from the metre sanctioned by him whom Joseph Warton has justly called "the great poet of reason, the first of all ethical authors in verse;" he has adopted Pope's couplet as modified by Goldsmith. The lines flow with greater freedom, but, with very few exceptions, you cannot help feeling that they form a stanza. When, however, he tells the story of Columbus, he is not content with his former measure; he has it enfranchised still further, so that the effect of

the stave is almost entirely averted. It is also to an attempt of this kind, whether conscious or not, an endeavour to get rid of the stanza form, that we can trace many of the liberties taken in the employment of this measure by Leigh Hunt, and still more by one who, had he been spared to us longer, might have added to the English language a second great Epic worthy of the name—John Keats.

This subject may be closed with a few words in illustration of a remark made above, (p. 175,) and which I was then unable to dwell upon. I spoke of the absurdity of running one line into another as a general rule, so that the chief pause is not at the end of the line, but somewhere in the body of it. This has nothing to do with the music of the verse; it is a question wholly of penmanship and of printing. The writing of verse in lines is altogether meaningless, and there is no reason why words, however timed, should not be written as common prose, unless it is meant at the end of each line to make a powerful pause. Take the following example from Endymion:

> "By thee will I sit
> For ever: let our fate stop here—a kid
> I on this spot will offer: Pan will bid
> Us live in peace, in love and peace, among
> His forest wildernesses."

If you keep to the idea of a line, these verses ought to

be written as they are spoken, with the rhymes in the middle of the bars: thus,

> "By thee will I sit for ever: let our fate stop here—
> A kid I on this spot will offer:
> Pan will bid us live in peace,
> In love and peace, among his forest wildernesses."

This rule is as evident as that which forbids a comma in the place of a full stop, or a full stop in that of a comma. A poet may change the nature of his line as often as he pleases, but he is not free to violate habitually the very idea of a line. Sometimes he may take that freedom, as in the following from Beattie's Minstrel:

> "And loud enlivening strains provoke the dance,
> They meet, they dart away, they wheel askance:
> To right, to left, they thrid the flying maze,
> Now bound aloft with vigorous spring, *then glance*
> *Rapid along;*"

or as in this from the Princess:

> "She
> Began to address us and was moving on
> In gratulation, *till as when a boat*
> *Tacks*, and her slackened sail flaps, all her voice
> Faltering and fluttering in her throat, she cried
> 'My brother.'"

But the difference between an improper and an allowable freedom of this kind will be seen in what follows from the Faithful Shepherdess of Fletcher:

> "More foul distempers than ere yet *the hot*
> *Sun* bred through his burnings, *while the dog*
> *Pursues the raging lion.*"

And surely there must be something radically wrong in the mode of printing, when, as in the rhyme of Endymion, and in blank verse generally, the exception becomes the rule. Johnson quotes approvingly a saying, that blank verse is verse only to the eye. It is not a true saying, it is only a poor cousin of the truth. Blank verse is verse to the eye, and it makes music to the ear; but the verse which comes to the ear is not that which meets the eye. It should not be written nor printed in the common way: it should be penned and printed like Thalaba. Here is the opening of that poem, written after no such arabesque fashion as Southey supposed, but according to plain sense:

> "How beautiful is night!
> A dewy freshness fills the silent air;
> No mist obscures, nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain
> Breaks the serene of heaven;
> In full-orbed glory, yonder moon divine
> Rolls through the dark blue depths;
> Beneath her steady ray
> The desert circle spreads,
> Like the round ocean girdled with the sky.
> How beautiful is night!"

This much admired passage has the true melody of blank verse, and it may be so written, without any very deadly sin to trouble our consciences:

> "How beautiful is night! A dewy fresh-
> Ness fills the silent air; no mist obscures,
> Nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain breaks the serene
> Of heaven; in full-orbed glory yonder moon

> Divine—rolls through the dark blue depths; beneath
> Her steady ray the desert circle spreads,
> Like the round ocean girdled with the sky.
> How beautiful is night!

But what is hereby gained? There is often as little pause between two words which are written in different lines as between the two syllables of *fresh-ness;* and those who are content that the idea of a line should thus be made a sham, need no longer quarrel with

> "the water gru-
> El at or absent from the U-
> Niversity of Göttingen."

CHAPTER III.

IMAGERY.

At the end of his treatise on the Art of English Poesy, Puttenham gives a list of those figures of speech which in the body of his work he had examined one by one: "Eclipsis or the figure of default; zeugma, or the single supply; prozeugma, or the ringleader; mesozeugma, or the middle-marcher; hypozeugma, or the rereward-er; syllepsis, or the double supply; hypozeuxis, or the substitute; aposiopesis, or the figure of silence, otherwise called the figure of interruption; prolepsis, or the propounder; hyperbaton, or the trespasser; paren-thesis, or the insertor; hysteron-proteron, or the prepos-terous; enallage, or figure of exchange; hypallage, or the changeling; homoioteleton, or the figure of likeloose; parimion, or figure of likeletter; asindeton, or figure of lose language; polysindeton, or the couple clause; irmus, or the long loose; epitheton, or the qualifier; endiades, or the figure of twins; . . " The list is interesting as an attempt to render into English the Greek names employed in rhetoric; and as thus far

copied, it is remarkable as being but a tenth part of the whole. Here of course we may not enter into such detail, and neither may we encumber ourselves with those figures which are merely figures of speech. We have to do only with such as may be classed under the general name of Imagery.

It has already been shown (p. 157) that verse and imagery are evolved at once and together from the first law of poetry, the law of imagination; and that as the primary object of the former is to express time, so the primary object of the latter is to denote place. I speak of place in the widest sense of the word, be it pure space, be it locality or geographical place, be it shape or form, that is, defined and figured place.

By imagery many seem especially to understand similitude; and it would seem to be a common opinion that rich and rare similitudes form the peculiar device of poesy. They form indeed a splendid ornament, and for the purpose which they serve are invaluable. That distinguishing purpose will be unfolded in treating of imagery as developed by the second law of poetry, and as employed in epic poesy; but it must here be remarked that, although similes can and do in their own way further the object of the first law, namely, in representing place to the mind, they are by no means essential to that end. A few examples may be given to show how, without similitude or metaphor, the idea of place may be thus conveyed to the mind.

There is a certain class of comparisons (called *long-tailed* by a French writer) in which, after the illustration has been run out, and when we should expect the poet to say no more about it, since it is no longer parallel, he yet dwells on it, and follows it seemingly for its own sake. Undoubtedly this will sometimes happen from the poet's being unable to stop himself, and in such a case he is finely exposed to the torments of the critic; but even the scrupulous critics of the last century found it in their hearts to defend the license. Johnson rightly defended it, because of its helping to fill the imagination. It affords no similitude, but it scoops out a place whereinto another picture may enter.

Again: Wordsworth has a habit, peculiar I believe to himself and to but one other poet, of laying out the mind as so much ground; and he does this (always admirably) sometimes with and sometimes without a decided metaphor. The haunt and main region of his song is the human mind; he beholds throughout nature a presence whose dwelling is, among other *places* mentioned, the mind of man; his heart is housed within a dream; a sound carries the mountains far into the heart of the Windermere boy; nature is at the heart of Peter Bell. Were my words a thousandfold weightier than they are, and were the fact a hundred times more important than it happens to be, it can take nothing from that noble meed of praise which Wordsworth has now at length won for himself, and had well earned

from the very beginning, to say what does, I think, lessen very considerably the force of those critical remarks which he has written to the hurt of Ossian, that in attaining these wonderful effects he owes not a little to the very work which he has brought before his judgment-seat to condemn so unmercifully. His treatment of this manner is very masterly, and certainly an improvement on that of Ossian; yet to show its frequency with the latter, I will quote only the instances that occur in the first piece of that collection which goes under his name. "Deaths wander like shadows over his fiery soul;" "Grief is dwelling in his soul;" "White handed daughter of grief, a cloud marked with streaks of fire, is rolled along thy soul;" "The son of Starno dwells lonely in my soul." Without as well as with similitude, the mind here becomes a part of space.

Often the very denial of similitude is highly poetic, and affords a clearer and broader conception of space than were it affirmed. What a vast reach does the following remarkable verse of Xenophanes open up!

εἷς θεὸς ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος·
οὔτε δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοίϊος, οὔτε νόημα.

One God only there is; He greatest of gods and of mankind;
Like unto mortals neither in body, nor yet in idea.

And who that has read can have forgotten those marvellous words of Christopher North: "The airy anthem

came floating over our couch, and then alighted without footsteps among the heather?"

Without any similitude, the idea of place is sometimes presented in a very forcible manner by a change of time. The line in which Keats hints at an event which has yet to take place, as if it had already taken place, must be well known:—

> "So the two brothers and their *murdered* man
> Rode past fair Florence."

This, however, is but a skilful adaptation of a very common phrase, "We be all dead men." Keble has something more uncommon in that little poem on Lilies, which, if not the most powerful, is perhaps the most touching and beautiful that even he has written:—

> "Ye dwell beside our paths and homes,
> Our paths of sin, our homes of sorrow,
> And guilty man, where'er he roams,
> Your innocent mirth may borrow.
> The birds of air before us fleet,
> They cannot brook our shame to meet,
> But we may taste your solace sweet,
> And come again to-morrow."

How finely, how suddenly by the change of time, in the last word of the stanza, from any morrow to the morrow of this day, are we landed into the very spot where he is standing, and in the twinkling of an eye shown everything around! An unexpected turn of the same kind will be found in Hooker: "Whatsoever we know, we have it by the hands and ministry of men,

which lead us along like children from a letter to a syllable, from a syllable to a word, from a word to a line, from a line to a sentence, from a sentence to a side, *and so turn over.*" The passage will have a more prosaic, and perhaps the true rendering, by taking the last verb for the present indicative; but it first strikes one that the verb is an imperative, and that we are bidden turn over. In this case, the effect would be wrought by a change, not of time, but of mood. By the Attic poets the imperative is very often used for like service, although, for the most part, in a manner quite untranslatable.

Yet again, the use of mere rhyme will sometimes give height, or depth, or length, or breadth, as the case may be, to our conception of place. In rhyme, it is very difficult to describe the grand; yet Sir Walter Scott masters, nay triumphs over, the difficulty by multiplying the rhymes till they become monotonous; and almost always, when he has to describe any thing afar, or widely spreading, he will chime four, five, and even six times. With what wonderful skill does he send Edinburgh into the distance, when, describing it from Blackford Hill, he employs the rhymes, first, like so many milestones to mark off the length of way, and then, after reaching the distant city, measuring it up and down with the same broad line:—

> "Still on the spot Lord Marmion stayed,
> For fairer scene he ne'er surveyed.

When sated with the martial show,
That peopled all the plain below,
The wandering eye might o'er it go,
And mark the distant city glow
With gloomy splendour red;
For on the smokewreaths huge and slow,
That round the sable turrets flow,
The morning beams were shed,
And tinged them with a lustre proud
Like that which streaks a thunder cloud."

Vary or banish altogether the above rhymes, and the effect is spoilt. Another fine instance of the same is the description of Loch Coriskin; in the opening lines of which his fancy ranges over broad Scotland, seeking out the barrenest glens, and in them for the scanty footprints of vegetation; and then falling back on the still more barren isle, he finishes, as none but a master can, a picture which in every touch, from first to last, is perfect:—

"The wildest glen but this can show
Some touch of nature's genial glow;
On high Benmore the mosses grow,
The heathbells bud in deep Glencoe,
And copse on Cruachan Ben;
But here, nor tree, nor shrub, nor flower,
Nor aught of vegetative power,
The wearied eye may ken;
For all is rocks at random thrown,
Huge crags, bare blocks and banks of stone."

Another way of perfecting the idea of place, without making use of similitude, is by entering into detailed description, such as Crabbe is so fond of employing;

and there are yet other ways. The foregoing examples, however, are more than enough to show how, under this first law of poesy, space may be cleared out before the mind's eye without as well as with a simile. In thus showing how the idea of place may be conveyed, I have dwelt upon the fact, that comparison is not essential any more than a staff is essential for walking, or a wand for an augur's marking out the houses of heaven; because it is sometimes taken for granted, that the mere tracing of resemblances, whether clearly as in simile, or confusedly as in metaphor, is poesy above everything else, and a poem is often judged by the novelty and the number of such comparisons. Nor can it be denied, that over and above the finding of lodging or local habitation for the ideas of the mind, the mere tracing of likeness is conducive to the ends of poesy. All I mean to say is, that a poem is not to be judged by its happy comparisons any more than by its happy rhymes; and that least of all are those poems (dramatic, to wit) which mainly depend on this first law of poetry to be so judged. To do so would be even more foolish than to appraise a house from a sample of its brick; it would be appraising the house from a sight of the ivy leaves which drape the walls, and give the building a greater depth of shade. Yet often this is done. A man's poems are hashed down, the plums are picked out, and served up as the beauties of Shakespere or of Byron—beauties that lose half their sweet-

ness by being out of place. At the end of each day's labour, the Almighty Maker saw that his work was good; but not till the sixth evening, when he had finished and surveyed all, did he see that it was very good. On the contrary, some of our makers fall into the gross error of writing not a poem, but a book of beauties, stringing their pearls almost at random, in the vain hope that they may give up the unity of the whole for the exceeding beauty of the parts. And the remark of Lord Jeffrey, that there can be no better test of a man's liking for poetry than his liking for John Keats, has often been wrested into an approval of this manner: whereas, it only means that whoever can stand out the extravagance of Keats, must have yielded very far to the third and highest law of poetry—its unconsciousness. On the other hand, one shows a taste for good poesy, who can enjoy the severe beauty of Sophocles, a style the most opposite of any to that of Keats. The Greek poets, whose works were recited rather than read, and above all, the Greek tragedians, whose plays were only recited once, were far less lavish than the modern of those wayside flowers which to us, who can sit down each by himself to read a poem as a whole, or to dwell how we list on the particular passages, are so pleasing. We cannot, therefore, put the comparison very strongly between the ancient and the modern poets, inasmuch as the former, in order to be understood, were compelled by circumstances which have no place with us to mould

their thoughts so much more simply; yet it does hold in some degree. We are always liable to slide into a kind of poesy which has the same bearing to the better class of romantic poems, that the poesy of Euripides, and afterwards of the Anthology, has to the simplicity of the classic model. Aristophanes called the failing, as it showed itself in his day, Euripid-dandi-like (κομψευριπικῶς); and these partial beauties, a ribbon here and a trinket so, are very dandilike. We want a more manly poesy; rich in ornament if you will, so it help out the idea, and do not encumber the poem.

These remarks, in themselves tame enough, will be electrified with new meaning, if seen from their proper point of view; if it is seen that they are not general remarks which might cover any page of this volume quite as well as the present, but that they are penned in the interest of the first law of poetry, namely, the imaginative law, which demands that, in expressing our ideas, we give them a place.

In turning to consider how imagery is further developed by the second and by the third laws of poetry, I must strike a bargain with the reader as to the meaning of certain words.

Every one acquainted, however slightly, with the poetical criticism of the last fifty years, must have come across a distinction between what is called Fancy and what is called Imagination; a distinction first befriended, if not first set on foot, by Words-

worth, and afterwards accepted by men far greater than he in the walk of criticism. The distinction is good, and is not good. Almost all Wordsworth's criticism is built upon the narrowest basis, and certainly the above distinction is wanting in breadth. Our representative faculty, commonly called the imagination, sometimes called the mind's eye, he divides into two, one of them called Fancy, the other called Imagination. This in itself is an abuse of language; the abuse however is felt to be still greater when it is perceived that the division is founded upon no broad distinction in the nature of the faculty, but simply upon a distinction observed in the manner in which, at different times and under different circumstances, comparisons are made, as though comparison were the chief work of the faculty. "He was tall as a giant," is a comparison said to spring from the Fancy; "His stature reached the sky," is a comparison said to come from the Imagination. A difference there is between these comparisons, and well to mark it; but that difference will not warrant our splitting the imaginative faculty itself into two separate faculties. *Entia non sunt multiplicanda præter necessitatem.* The distinction between those comparisons which Wordsworth has referred to the Fancy, and those which he has referred to the Imagination, is entirely owing to the different degrees of consciousness which they severally exhibit; and this again is fully explained, if it be remembered that, according as the imagination is weak or

strong, its consciousness will be strong or weak. When imagination is at its height, then is consciousness at its lowest ebb; and as the tide of the latter rises, the spirit of the former vanishes. Thus, Wordsworth demands two faculties different in kind to account for that which one and the same faculty, roused to less or greater activity, quite well explains. The fault of his division is particularly felt when we bring it to bear upon comparisons that have features neither decidedly of the one cast nor yet of the other; so that we can hardly tell whether they are born of Fancy or born of Imagination. No such difficulty can be felt if, instead of setting up two faculties different in kind, to one or other of which these comparisons must belong, we simply ask, as we are alone entitled to ask, whether they are born of a weak or of a strong Imagination?

It is very manifest that the distinction which Wordsworth endeavoured to establish between Fancy and Imagination corresponds with the distinction which other critics have endeavoured to establish between Simile and Metaphor. Here, again, the distinction is good, and is not good. In a general way, and so long as we are dealing with extreme instances of simile and of metaphor, it works well; but when we apply it to doubtful examples, we find, if it is too much to say a distinction without a difference, it is too little to say a distinction founded on a merely mechanical difference, a difference of expression. A simile is distinguished

from a metaphor by the accident of having certain words to herald the comparison formally. Rely upon it, unless in our hearts we felt that between the two there lies a difference less trifling than this of having, or not having, a kind of usher, the distinction would long ere now have been forgotten. For it must be remembered, that many comparisons which have all the rapidity, all the effect, of metaphors, take the lower form of simile only from the unwieldiness of language. We can say, Our mortal life is sunned by faith; but without coining a word, we cannot say, Our benighted life is mooned by faith; and here, therefore, if no other expression turns up, we must have recourse to simile. The simile, however, will be, or ought to be, a virtual metaphor; and in like manner instances could be given where metaphor is no better than simile, as in Chesterfield's couplet,

> "The dews of the night most carefully shun;
> They are tears of the sky for the loss of the sun."

And besides, there is a kind of covert comparison, which, if the verbal be the true test, can be ranked neither with simile nor yet with metaphor, into which two classes all comparisons are divided; as the following from Chaucer,

> "Up rose the sun, and up rose Emelie."

Pope clearly saw that the difference between simile and metaphor lies deeper than the turn of expression, when,

in the preface to his Homer, he said that "a metaphor is a short simile." It is a likeness traced so unconsciously as to be confounded with the reality. Simile is what Wordsworth would have called a fancied resemblance, metaphor is what he would have called an imagined resemblance, had he but noticed that the difference between them must lie in their very nature, and in the feeling which gives them utterance, not in the mode of that utterance, which, of course, must depend upon the accidents of language, the metaphors of one tongue being often the similes of another. If it be said that in doing away with the verbal test no other means are left of distinguishing among comparisons, might we not reply, Better no test whatever, than such a bad one? In any doubtful case, the ordeal of words can no more detect metaphor from simile than the ordeal of drowning could detect a witch, the ordeal of fire a thief, or the ordeal of touch a murderer. But there is a test, and that test is in every man's bosom; not an objective standard, but subjective; a test the same as that employed by Wordsworth to separate between the work of Fancy and the work of Imagination. It is true that this test is variable, not to be enforced in a doubtful case, only convincing each man for himself. What is but simile to me, may to you in a higher state of feeling be metaphor; what is metaphor when read in a poem, may be simile when read detached as a motto. The latter line of Chesterfield's couplet Wordsworth

has described as a mere fancy, and I have described it as a mere simile; but were it properly placed, were it surrounded on all sides with powerful description, it would then become as truly an imagination, as truly a metaphor, as in its own place are the like words of Milton, which, however, if removed from the context, seem to convey a comparison hardly less fanciful than do the words of Chesterfield:

> "Sky lowered, and, muttering thunder, some sad drops
> Wept at completing of the mortal sin
> Original."

Variable though it be, a moment's thought will show that it is the only test in our power. For every one who reads in a tongue with which he is not very familiar, has to analyze the words in going along; as what to the Greek was but a single word πρόσοικος, expressing a single thought, *neighbour*, is now, according to the German fashion of using the terminal sigma in the middle of such a compound, virtually broken into two words, πρός-οικος, *nigh-bower*. He has thus also to analyze every metaphor, breaking each into a simile, the comparative conjunction (so, as, like) being supplied either in thought or in word. And it must be clear that if a foreigner can and does thus evidently in his own mind decompose metaphors into similes, it is competent for every native to read as similes all those comparisons which he is unable to appreciate as metaphors. Simile is the comparison of like with like, not

forgetting that they are only like; metaphor is the employment of like for like, not doubting that they are one and the same.

By thus bringing the two pairs of distinctions to check one another, I hope that we arrive at something like the truth; and, as thus understood, I have now to say, that the second law of poetry begets simile, and that the third law of poetry begets metaphor.

The fountainhead of simile is the law of Harmony or Affinity. Man has a deep-seated love of unity and wholeness: he cannot bear to look upon a thing in fragments, but will attempt by fair means or by foul to gather and piece the shreds together and survey them as complete. He will not only make the attempt; but, if he chooses, the attempt may be successful. For, with all great poets it is a ruling idea, many philosophers have likewise been assured, and the instinct of every man will tell him, that not only among the outward shows, but also among the inward laws of the different worlds wherein we live, there is something more than chance similarity, there is a family likeness, a sameness often amounting to repetition. Bacon felt this deeply, declaring that what men of narrow observation conceive as similitudes are really "the same footsteps of nature" treading upon different grounds. This, and the ethical principle of disinterestedness (both of them derived from the one law that isolation is nowhere to be found in God's world) were the two points on which

the mind of Butler turned. It were easy to go on multiplying names; and examples are not far to seek. When Wordsworth sings of poets *sown* by nature, and of a child *growing in sun and shower*, are these at best mere comparisons? Not so will they appear to one who has attentively read Wordsworth. Almost every page that he has written bears token of his belief that between man and the flowers of the field there is a very close alliance, that man is indeed a tree, endowed with powers of self-knowledge and self-movement; a faith shared by many beside, but entered into by none so entirely, unless by George Herbert; a faith which is nowhere more strongly and more frequently affirmed than in the assurances of Holy Writ, and which the legendary lore of Daphnes and Ariels, together with our love for trees, and the way in which we lament their downfal more than anything else not human, proves to be deeply rooted in every bosom. It is the leading object of simile to trace this family likeness wherever it may be found; and it must be evident that in so doing it is guided by the law of harmony, which, as explained in these pages, might not improperly be called the law of liking. To like, impels us to liken. To dislike, impels us to unliken; and this not merely in the negative sense of denying what would be an agreeable likeness, but also in the positive sense of asserting one that is disagreeable. Our liking determines the likeness.

Here, then, let the law of Unconsciousness come into play: what must be the effect? To weld simile into metaphor. The likeness will be more or less blended with that which it reflects, so that in many cases one may not be able at once to tell the substance from the shadow. When the wine of astonishment is so deeply drunk as to bring over us that bewilderment which has been described as peculiar to the third law of poetry, and which is expressed by the Latin (although not by the English) words *stupor* and *torpor;* when, to use strong language, but not too strong even for such a scoffing wit as Shakespere's Biron, a divine voice

> "Makes heaven *drowsy* with the harmony;"

there may well be this fusion of ideas, confusion if you will. Its highest result is to personify.

Localization, Assimilation, Identification; such, then, are in due order the effects of the three laws of poetry. The first law houses an idea; the second law matches it with another; the third law regards them both as one flesh.

It remains to be shown that these different developments of imagery belong, the first to Dramatic, the second to Epic, and the third to Lyrical poesy. It is hoped that the reader will in a measure see the truth of this at once, and without any formal proof, as the palpable kind of proof brought forward to show the nature of the versi-

fication employed in the three different orders of poesy cannot be brought forward here. The form of verse, employed in any part of a poem, is the same throughout. But not so with imagery: we have no guarantee that the kind of image employed in one part of a poem shall be the same in every other. Appeal must therefore be made to general impressions, not to set examples.

And first of Dramatic imagery. It has already been observed that when Shakespere speaks of a local habitation given by imagination to the phantoms of the brain, he speaks of that kind of imagery which is peculiarly his own, dramatic imagery. If instead of such words as we have hitherto employed, *locality*, *space*, *place*, we use the narrower terms, *figure*, *form*, *shape* (= space defined); and if in connexion with these words it be remembered that the drama is the expression of the Beautiful; it will then be clear how that kind of imagery is peculiarly suitable to this kind of poesy. In so far as imagery is concerned, the latter words might have been employed all along, had it not been an object by the use of the former and more general terms to make good the remark which, in treating of the Drama, (see p. 130) was taken for granted, that the dramatic, the first law of poetry, begets the idea of place. Scenery is to the whole action of the drama what form or figure is to its passing thoughts. To say of an event that *it has taken place*, is an expression arising out of a dramatic state of feeling. As the scenery is the imagery

of the entire drama, so its imagery, strictly so called, is the scenery of its individual ideas. This is very happily expressed by Shakespere when he speaks of the airy nothings having a *local habitation;* and the best examples of this kind of imagery are furnished by himself. He has comparisons in abundance, both simile and metaphor: sometimes the image is grand, sometimes it is grotesque, almost always it is brilliant; but if as a whole his imagery is remarkable for one thing more than another, it is remarkable for its word-painting, its scene-painting, and if there is one name more than another applied to it by his admirers, they say that it is picturesque. You do not say that Milton or Homer is picturesque; you do not say that the Psalms of David are picturesque. In these, the highest types of epic and lyric, we do indeed find many a graphic touch; but graphic power is not their predominant characteristic. It will be found that as the imagery of the drama is chiefly picturesque, so that of the epic is mainly illustrative, while that of the lyric is creative or vivifying. If the classical scholar will revert to his impressions of the three Greek dramatists, he will see the truth of this. He must know that Æschylus, the most lyrical, is remarkable for the number and the boldness of his metaphors. There are few metaphors finer, and perhaps none more often quoted, than that in the Prometheus Bound, in which he speaks of the uncontrollable laughter of the waves,

ποντιών τε κυμάτων
ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα,

a passage, by the way, that is constantly mis-translated, as though referring to what Keble calls

"The many-twinkling smile of ocean,"

when it plainly refers to the open-mouthed laughter of billows that break upon the shore. It is quite different with Sophocles, the purest of the Greek dramatists, who almost resembles Shakespere in the lively picturing of his ideas, and dwells on simile, or on metaphor, not for its own sake, but simply for the purpose of giving shape to the object of his thought. In King Œdipus (v. 22, 23, 24,) the priest describes the city as he would a ship, and, after having dismissed the image, he returns to it again, and yet again, still in such an unconscious manner, as to show that in his own mind he is not using it as a comparison, but as a means of realizing to sense that ideal something which the Greeks call *πόλις*, and which we call a state. Euripides, on the other hand, delights in comparison above all things. Often what seem to be the most rapid metaphors, are, coming from him, only similes. Take the first two lines of the Medea:

Εἴθ' ὤφελ' Ἀργοῦς μὴ διαπτάσθαι σκάφος,
Κόλχων ἐς αἶαν, κυανέας Συμπληγάδας.

A ship *flying* through the water is a metaphor bold enough, although common; but a ship flying through the blue Symplegades is, to any one acquainted with the legend, nothing but a simile. The poet is consciously comparing the ship to the pigeon which the Argonauts, by the advice of Phineus, let fly through the rocks, and whose fortune was to foreshadow, and did foreshadow, that of the Argo. Herein, as will presently be explained, he is true to that epic nature which perhaps was the cause of his being so great a favourite with Milton.

Before turning to that explanation, however, and in order to allay any remaining doubt as to the character of dramatic imagery, let Sismondi's criticism of Alfieri, the greatest of late dramatists, be well weighed; a criticism that has also its meaning as a description of dramatic versification. (Litter. du Midi, Chap. xx.) "Alfieri, above all things, afraid of being compared to Metastasio, sought to render his style hard and short; to break the harmony wherever there was fear of its becoming sing-song; to run verse into verse; to suppress every superfluous ornament; *all figure, all comparison, even the most natural*, as another would have studied to impart to his compositions these poetic charms." And then he quotes a passage in which Alfieri exhibits that ideal of a dramatic style which he had endeavoured to fulfil in practice. The following words are to the present purpose: "I may

say that their language is neither too epic, nor at any time lyrical, except when it may be so without ceasing to be tragic: thence comes it that there is in them nothing of comparison except as a very short image, [that is to say, no epic imagery]; very little of narrative, which is never long, and never inserted but where necessary; very few opinions, and none coming from the author; no swelling of the thoughts, and very little of the expression," such as we find in the lyric.

Of Epic imagery, Sir Richard Steele gives an excellent account. He says, "There is nothing so forced and constrained as what we frequently meet with in tragedies, to make a man under the weight of great sorrow, or full of meditation upon what he is soon to execute, cast about for a simile to what he himself is, or the thing which he is going to act." When he says that this is frequently met with in tragedies, he must be understood to mean such as date after the Restoration. Dryden in his later years could not help acknowledging this impropriety in his own plays: speaking (Preface to Du Fresnoy) of poets wandering into simile while they are working up a passion, he adds, "My Montezuma dies with a fine one in his mouth, but it is out of season." Sir Richard, however, goes on to say, that "there is nothing more proper and natural for a poet, whose business it is to describe, and who is spectator of one in that circumstance, when his mind is

working upon a great image, and that the ideas hurry upon his imagination—I say, there is nothing so natural as for a poet to relieve and clear himself from the burden of thought at that time, by uttering his conception in simile and metaphor." In the Tatler, from one of the numbers of which (No. 43) the above extract is made, the similes of Tragedy are a standing joke; and such they might well be, as the dramatists of that day wrought after the classic or epic model, and moulded their images accordingly. It is true that the Tatler makes many playful allusions to the similes of an epic, as well as of a tragic, poet; but, as in the foregoing quotation, the similes are always recognised as not misplaced in a narrative. Steele makes a poet who is anxious to give up business, and to sell his stock in trade, tell over his goods, amongst which there appears the following item: "I have further about fifty similes that were never yet applied, besides three-and-twenty descriptions of the sun rising, that might be of great use to an epic poet." What then is the use of simile to an epic poet?

It will be remembered that the object of the epic (see p. 136) is to express Truth—substantial as well as phenomenal truth. Now, simile is the perception from a certain point of view of substantial agreement between things apparently different. Simile is thus, in one way, a continual assertion, a living witness, that in epic poesy the mind is looking below the surface of things,

looking deeper than the phenomenal, even to the substantial. Whatever its nature, let it be never so far-fetched, it would of itself bear this testimony. But when well chosen, as it commonly is by a great poet, simile testifies much more; it testifies not only that the poet is regarding the substantial, but also that he is relating substantial truth. "Use lessens marvel;" a marvel repeated is no marvel. Be the logic good or bad by which we arrive at this conclusion, there it is. When that which we never saw, when that which we never knew, is compared to that which we have seen, or to that which we know; when the uncommon is paralleled by something common, it assumes an air of probability. A single analogy, even when very remote and very superficial, is enough to satisfy the mind. Like is likely.

Being thus fitted for the purposes of epic poesy, it is natural that simile should be very largely employed by the epic poet. It is the kind of imagery most favoured by Homer; so greatly favoured indeed, that some critics have not shrunk from declaring that he who, according to Horace, did nothing in vain, qui nil molitur inepte, scattered it far too lavishly. It is to be observed, however, that, in the dialogue, similes are but sparingly introduced; they are almost entirely confined to the narrative, and there alone can it ever be said of his hand that it was unsparing. Nor does Homer stand alone. With simile Milton abounds, and of his meta-

phors, Addison is justified not only in saying that he seldom has recourse to them where the proper and natural words will do as well, but also in another saying which is applied likewise to Homer and to Virgil, namely, that as the story or fable is the soul of each of their poems, so their episodes are but short fables, their similes are but short episodes, and their metaphors are but short similes. The latter part of this remark will appear more striking than true to one who is accustomed to look upon simile merely as an embellishment, and not as a necessary mode of illustration. If the observations already hazarded on the use of simile weigh at all with the reader, they will have prepared him to understand how simile is indeed a kind of episode running parallel to the action of the poem in order to confirm or to illustrate the story; and if he will not take mine, he may take Addison's word for it, that in the great epic metaphor is for the most part only a kind of simile.

The Lyric is that form of poesy best known and best understood. Hitherto it has cost us no trouble, nor will it now present any difficulty As it is the object of dramatic imagery to embody; as it is the object of epic imagery to compare; so it is the object of lyrical imagery to animate. This it does by the use of metaphor, of which the highest type is personification. The metaphorical cast of lyrical imagery none will deny; it would be labour lost to accumulate the proofs of that

which all must readily admit. Better to show that this cast of imagery follows of necessity from the very nature of a lyric.

It has already been stated, that as the great end of the drama is to portray the Beautiful, it naturally adopts a style of imagery that represents place, form, figure, shape, body, or whatever it may be called; a style that, in the words of Shakespere, bodies forth the forms of things unknown, turns them to shapes, and gives to vague abstractions a local habitation. It has also been shown how, since the aim of an epic is to unfold Truth, very naturally the style of imagery adopted is not figurative, is mainly illustrative: the similes may be good illustrations, bad illustrations, or no illustrations at all, but illustrations they are always intended to be. In like manner, it holds that, since the lyric endeavours after the good, it must therefore naturally employ, not figurative, not illustrative, but creative or lifegiving imagery. If not clear at the first glance, this will be clear with a few words of explanation. It was previously mentioned that Hope, Faith, and Love are the feelings with which we regard respectively the Beautiful, the True, and the Good; it was further mentioned that the Beautiful, the True, and the Good correspond to those words employed by our Saviour when he describes himself as being the Way, the Truth, and the Life. If these expressions are parallel, what light do they throw upon the Lyric? They

show that in the lyric we express our love of the Good, or of what is emphatically called Life,—the Love of Life. But in a loose way, it might be said, according to the Platonic doctrine, that love is life itself, life being manifested only as an activity, and love being the principle of activity. So that in the lyric, we might say that Life is in search of Life. Accept this, and it will at once be understood how the lyric, by its imagery, must create, must vivify, must personify, in short, must be metaphorical.

BOOK FOURTH.

WHAT OF THE POET?

WHAT OF THE POET?

WHETHER a perfect theory of the nature of the Poet be possible or impossible, and whether we shall ever hereafter attain to such knowledge or not, it would at least require to be founded on a much wider induction of facts than we at present possess. I therefore beg that the following remarks may be regarded as an inquiry, not as a theory; an inquiry as of persons at sea, who, without sextant, or compass, or chart, ask each other wistfully where lies the nearest land.

"Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant," are the words of one who, being himself King of kings, became the Servant of servants. They are generally taken as an exhortation to lowliness in all who govern; but they mean much more: they explain the whole art and theory of government. In so far as you gain power over others you always lose power over yourself: to be the master of any kingdom—earthly or

unearthly—you must cease to be your own master. When this is thoroughly done, it is not enough that time, strength, and everything, heart, head, and hand be given up; you must often even forget that you have a being, and, unthinking as those stars that guide and rule us, follow the rule and guidance of your sphere. This for two reasons: because only thus can all the powers of your own mind be called forth, and because only thus can your subjects be lulled into that passive frame of mind which will admit of the strongest impressions. Men do not readily yield to a power which they see rising before their eyes, and seeking to have the mastery; not unless the power be seated already, and before they know it. Every dictator, like the dictator of ancient Rome, must win his high place in the dead of night while men are asleep.

Such is a most general description of that necessity which all the rulers of mankind, including the poet, obey; and out of it arise two questions. Is it not degrading to admit such a necessity? some will ask; and, if the necessity be admitted, all will ask for further information as to its nature. Let us examine these questions.

It may be said that without self-government the sovereign man of whom we speak must be a mere engine, the poet, a puppet; and indeed Plato, for the very purpose of lowering the poet, endeavours to show that he is possessed, not self-possessed. This is to renew an

old feud in which the doctrine of Freedom throws down the gauntlet to the doctrine of Necessity. We cannot let those doughty champions fight it out here, for they might thrust and parry till doomsday; but perhaps a few words of explanation may settle a truce between them in the meantime.

If it is base to be overruled by laws which we never gave, if it is the depth of slavery to be swayed, as we continually are, by laws which we do not even know, it must surely also be great hardship and foul shame that man is not his own maker. But even were he his own maker, even were he a god, we should still in another form have to unriddle the problem of an overruling necessity. Without dwelling on that gross fatalism which we so often meet with in the classical theology; one instance of which is the startling declaration in the first book of Herodotus, that from his destiny it is impossible even for God to escape; turn to the Christian view of the subject. God is Almighty we say, and say truly; but in what sense He is thus mighty, how far He is free, is a subject we are continually stumbling on. Even children will put the question when they are told that God is unable to lie. *Οὐδὲν ἀδύνατον παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ, εἰ μὴ τὸ ψεύσασθαι,* says Clement of Rome, denying in the latter clause what he affirms in the former. He means that God cannot belie his word; but he really says that God cannot be false at all, cannot belie his nature. This opens the whole matter: How

is the Divine nature almighty seeing it is unchangeable? To answer that query is no business of ours: enough to say that if the Divine power is not lowered in our esteem, nor lessened in reality, because it cannot change, so neither is human power weakened, nor should it be contemned, because yielding to necessary laws.

These remarks have been made on the side of Necessity, and to show that the poet is not worthy of scorn, because not altogether free. Still more, however, has to be said for Freedom. Although we cannot conceive of a will that is absolutely free—neither shackled nor in any way actuated, yet that there is such a thing as freedom no man who feels that he is a reasonable being can for a moment gainsay. And that the poet, as a poet, is also free, none will doubt who have seen how often he follows a bad taste, as in morality men follow a froward liking. Now, wherever there is a right and a wrong, and wherever there is not only freedom of choosing the one or the other, but also a chance, a likelihood and a danger of sometimes choosing ill, no man in his right reason will blindly trust or blindly obey the bidding of nature; he will not sail before every wind that listeth to blow. Not until he has learnt from experience, perhaps a dearly bought experience, that the wind is a monsoon wafting him safely to his desired haven, will he cease to have misgivings; and then indeed does he yield himself fully to the skiey influence, if need be, spreading every stitch of canvass. The poet

will first be assured that his Pegasus knows the way, and then he may give Pegasus the reins. His gun will be well loaded, and his aim carefully taken, but his bullet will fly dead to the mark. He is thus not only possessed, but likewise self-possessed. There is a happy ambiguity in our English way of stating this fact; we say that a poet is in the possession of his genius, a form of expression that leaves it doubtful which has hold, which is held. He has self-command up to a certain point; when he loses that command, it is because he has chosen to give it up; and for so doing he is no more to be blamed than is the shipbuilder who, while his vessel lies on the stocks, can do with it what he pleases, but, in once removing the stays, cannot hinder a launch. A great poet does not trust to impulse alone; like Milton, he looks upon hard labour as his lot in life; he knows that the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong; he will not therefore lie down to sleep like the hare in the fable, but will zealously gather materials all he can, both consciously and unconsciously, lay trains of thought, and trustfully wait for the hour of his power, when the flash from heaven will descend, the train will be lighted, the mine sprung, the breach made, and the citadel taken.

If, then, a necessity can without degradation be allowed, and if it be allowed, further information will be asked as to its nature. What is the nature of this which

is called necessity? What is this called possession? What is this called inspiration? There are two theories which profess to clear up the mystery; the one very old and using the word inspiration in a literal sense, the other quite modern and using the word in a metaphorical sense.

This latter is so very far from being plain that it is at present the fashionable theory, and especially is befriended by that crowded class of writers whose words turn up like the tickets of a lottery, most of them blanks, a very few prizes. According to this theory, if I rightly understand it, every man truly great, a hero—that is the word—is of a make quite different from that of other men. They have talent, but he has genius, something different, not only in degree, but also in kind, a patented article, by means of which he can see and say and do things which to them are as impossible as flying. When the patentee works by his secret methods he is said to be inspired; and if he has no control over his inspiration, if his mind rushes on like a steam-engine that the driver is unable to stop, he is then said to be possessed. Although the theory comes to this, it is but fair to add that it is not in general stated so flatly; it is commonly enveloped in such a vast cloud of words as might not unworthily be likened to the volumes of mist in which Eastern genii sometimes appeared, only there needs no Solyman, son of Daoud, to enclose the whole of it in a cherry-

stone. It is wonderful, too, that in thus overwhelming us with unmeaning words, the hero-worshippers or fire-worshippers, or whatever they may be called, give not the slightest heed to Mr Carlyle's outcry against all such preaching, teaching, speeching, screeching; for they are professed admirers of his, and—with reverence be it spoken—followers, although at an enormous distance, the distance of an Arab mile, which, being so far as that man cannot be told from woman, is of course farther than that man can be told from man. If such are its forwardest upholders, what of the theory itself? It is a theory founded, and avowedly founded, on ignorance, the theory by which a black explains the superiority of a white, the theory of every savage regarding the civilized. Built on ignorance, it is buttressed on every side by self-conceit. For, as envy enters only where there is room for comparison, it pleasantly saves a man's pride to believe that since genius differs in kind from talent, all comparison between them is out of the question; so that he can look with evil eye no more upon the greatness of a hero than upon the glory of an angel or the endowments of a brute. Thus raised and thus propped, the theory is after all good for nothing; it neither explains nor attempts to explain; it rather seeks to drown inquiry, bidding us wait calmly until some genius shall have the good nature to unveil the secret workings of his mind. The candle is put out instead of being snuffed. And then, under the shadow

of exalting a certain few to a great height, the height of demigods—very doubtful advantage so long as your halfbreeds are but sorry mules; under the shadow of so raising a few, it lowers the many. What it gives to genius it gives at the cost of humanity. The hero is great, not because he is a man, but because he is more than man; and his crown of honour, therefore, instead of shedding lustre, pours shame upon his race. It is meet that a theory, born of ignorance, fostered by pride, and darkening what it has been sent to enlighten, should thus end by casting reproach upon mankind. Any theory but this.

It continually happens that a man ripe in years can find no rest for his soul but in that simple faith of his childhood, which, in the strength of his manhood, and with all the vainglory of his understanding, he had cast away with a sneer. Likewise mankind, after ages of what is at first a gentle misgiving, then a bolder doubt, at last a hardy denial, are fain to return to the spot where they first drew breath, there to embrace and to live among those abiding truths whereupon the world's grey fathers relied. In the noon of life a man believes in the power of his understanding, mistrusts his power of intuition; the more he advances, the more childlike he becomes, reasoning less and trusting more to his instincts. For, in good sooth, his instinct, his intuition, his insight, is a guide so much surer and safer than mere understanding, that it may almost be said to be

the only guide; as it is not unlikely that those truths, which we are supposed to discover by an analytic process, are never so discovered, but are seen at a single glance of intuition, at once known and felt to be true, whether we can prove them or not, and are then, though not till then, carefully assayed and weighed and stamped by the understanding.

Beside that which has just now been criticised the only other theory of composition in the field, although at the present day it meets with but little favour, has this merit of having satisfied the earlier instincts of our race,—I mean the theory of a real inspiration. It will have been observed that its phrases are both used and abused by the former theory; and indeed the two theories might in a manner be coupled, Pelion might be piled upon Ossa, were it not very awkward to attain by the two what ought to be attained by one. The worst faults also of the former might be repeated in this by the same narrowness that would make it apply only to a chosen few. By widening the ground, however, so that the theory may apply to all men, these evils at least will be shunned, if others cannot be avoided. It must be confessed that it is a very indefinite theory; and the following remarks will be given, not to any exposition of its details, but simply to an inquiry whether it may not contain some seeds of truth, and thus the means requisite to a likely solution of the problem. Without daring to offer, and yet without wishing to conceal my own

opinion, I will, in pushing this inquiry, only relate the opinion of others; that I may be able, as, in dealing with a matter so sacred and so nearly bordering on the great religious questions of the day, is most becoming, to take up the words of Menander, and say,

Μὴ τοῦτο βλέψῃς εἰ νεώτερος λέγω,
Ἀλλ' εἰ φρονούντων τοὺς λόγους ἀνδρῶν ἐρῶ.

George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne, is a name well known; his philosophy deserves to be better known than it is; and his life should be the best known of all. But the world, forgetting that he lived an apostle and died a saint, has passed judgment only upon his philosophy; and it has fared with him as with many another, that not only are the sins of the father entailed upon the children, but the sins of the children to the latest generation are all heaped upon the head of the father. It has therefore come to pass that his name is a very byword, to many a word of fear, to some a word of scorn; and there are those who would almost regard it as proving the low estate of the English Church that ever such a man should have been raised to the bench of bishops. Much, however, as we hear about his philosophy, it is little known, it is less understood, and least of all is any acquaintance shown with the end which it had in view. It was put forth against men who maintained either that there is no God, or that God, having

made the world, had wound it up like clockwork, and left it for ever. Against whom he set himself to show that this world of sense in which we are all embedded can have no existence apart from a perceiving mind; that it is upheld only because it is beheld; and that our perception of it must depend entirely upon the direct and continual action of the Deity upon our minds. This, it will be seen, in at least one department of human thought, amounts to a doctrine of inspiration. And I refer to it, not because Berkeley has proved his main point or points, for he has not, nor yet because they have been disproved, for they never have, but as showing that to one of the most truly philosophic minds that have anywhere shone, to a mind of the largest grasp, to a staid and sober mind, the doctrine of a real inspiration, a never-ceasing Divine suggestion, and this in the lowest walk of human knowledge, not only wore the colour of truth, but likewise carried an air of reason; the rather also, because if the Pantheistic creed be put aside, and if the doctrine of Malebranche as to seeing all things in God be allowed to fraternize with the doctrine of Berkeley, this may be considered as almost the only attempt ever made to prove on philosophic grounds that man is inspired of God.

But there are two real worlds in which we live and move, there is a world of spirit as well as a world of sense; and if it be singular with Berkeley to regard all vision of the latter as inspired, it will be singular to

regard spiritual vision as uninspired. It seems to be denied by some theologians that spiritual knowledge belongs to all men; they seem to say that only the regenerate can have any such, however feeble; yet as they admit every man to have some idea of a God, and as there can be no true idea of a God which is not spiritual, perhaps it will be found that they use the word in a peculiar and technical sense. However this be, there are at least some; we can point to one great man, George Fox, and to his followers, the Friends, whose faith it is that every man coming into the world is somewhat of a seer, and can at all events see his way to that Fountain of Light, where his eyeballs may be purged and strengthened, as the eagles are said to purge their sight by gazing on the sun. They believe that this fact is given in psychology, and that the finding of psychology is clinched by warrant of Holy Scripture. But they also believe, and reason as well as Scripture bears them out, that there can be no spiritual light which is not a direct heavenly gift, that none can see God unless God show himself, that the faintest perception of the Divine is divinely inspired.

Our knowledge of sense and our knowledge of spirit are so far alike as they are both immediate. And as George Berkeley believed the former to be inspired, as George Fox believed the latter to be inspired, so there have been many to believe that all our other knowledges, all feelings, all desires, are inbreathed by a holy

or by an unholy spirit. Professor Blackie, in a paper on the Theology of Homer, (Classical Museum, No. xxvi.) gives a very full and clear account of Greek ideas on this subject. The passage deserves to be quoted were it only for its evident sympathy with those ideas:—"It is remarked by some theologian,—I forget who,—that among all the objections made by the heathen philosophers to the doctrines of the Gospel, no exception was ever taken to the doctrine of divine influence, or the operation of the Holy Ghost on the human mind. This doctrine, which has been looked upon in modern times by Arminians, Pelagians, and others with a sort of jealousy, could not excite any suspicion, or appear even in the light of a novelty, in an age when all the higher minds in the moral world were initiated into the philosophy of Plato or Zeno, and when the great Catholic Bible of popular religious tradition, viz., Homer, recognised the doctrine of direct spiritual action of the divine mind on the human as one of its most familiar truths. That a man's genius and inclination are all divinely implanted is a truth sufficiently obvious, and which, stated as an abstract proposition, few even now-a-days will deny; but the difference between our time and the Homeric in this matter lies not so much in any abstract doctrine as in the comparative frequency of a correspondent phraseology in his language, and its unfrequency in ours. Thus, for instance, when Ulysses (Od. xix. 227.) says,

" αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ τὰ φίλ' ἔσκε τά που θεὸς ἐν φρεσὶ θῆκεν,
ἄλλος γάρ τ' ἄλλοισιν ἀνὴρ ἐπιτέρπεται ἔργοις,

he uses in the first line a distinctly marked Homeric phraseology, while the second line contains only what any of us in our common talk might say any day, and what in fact we do say every day. '*Those things are dear to me which a god put into my heart*'—this style refers the likings and dislikings of the human heart directly to a divine influence; while the other proposition, '*one man delights in one thing, another in another*,' merely asserts a human fact without giving any hint of its divine causation. Now, the habitual assertion of this divine causation in all the more notable movements of the human mind is one of the grand prominent features of that atmosphere of religion (or religiosity, as some may prefer to say) which gives such a peculiar colour to the Homeric epos. In the language of an obsolete criticism, (perhaps not yet altogether obsolete in certain quarters) the Olympian personages are termed the 'machinery' of the poem; if this word, however, is to be used, it is much more near the truth to say, that, in Homer's view, the mortal men are everywhere the mere machinery of the great drama of existence, of which the gods are the real actors. The constant occurrence in the Homeric page, with reference to human purposes, of such phrases as *ἐνὶ θυμῷ βάλλειν* (Od. i. 200), *ἐπὶ φρεσὶ θῆκε* (v. 427), *νόημα ποίησε* (xiv. 273), *θεοῦ*

ὑποθυμοσύνησιν (xvi. 233), and *ἐνέπνευσε φρεσὶ δαίμων* (xix. 138), show how familiar to the old Hellenic mind was that famous sentiment afterwards expressed by Cicero, '*Nemo vir magnus sine aliquo afflatu divino unquam fuit;*' and not only so, but a sentiment far more extensive than this, viz., that a man can in fact think nothing worth thinking, except by virtue of a direct divine impulse or inspiration. This is a method of viewing things to which the somewhat mechanical English mind (since the days of Cromwell at least) has shown a great aversion; but how far it is from being contrary to a high Christian philosophy, the single text, Luke xii. 12, may suffice to show."

To the proof. Nay: must everything be proved? Are there not some things which do not admit of proof? and may not this be one? To the blind man who hears the thunder we cannot prove that it is the noise of lightning. To the dull man who listens to the poet's song, it cannot be proved that that song noises of God. To the sleeper it cannot be proved that his house is on fire. Every man must awake, must see it and feel it for himself. What we are now desired to prove was the settled faith of great men, of the Irish bishop and of the English Quaker, of the heathen and of the Puritan, of Homer and of Milton. And, whether true or false, this doctrine of inspiration has at least one advantage; it leaves the question open. The other hypothesis, the theory of genius, unless you are a genius unmistakable,

shuts the door of inquiry on your face, although inquiry is of the utmost importance. It is especially important in the present day. Of far more than speculative interest, it very nearly concerns the great theological questions that are now being mooted, and will be mooted even more hotly hereafter. Almost all of them hinge on one point, the nature of biblical inspiration; of which we cannot be supposed to have much understanding, or any certain knowledge, until we understand and know what is poetical inspiration. The answer to this must furnish a key to that. It is said of Holy Writ, for instance, that not only is the inward thought inspired, but so also is the outward form, every word of it. This may be true or not; it is quite credible, and every man who longs for some ground of certainty in matters of faith will wish it to be true; nevertheless, until we explain how it happens that not only do thoughts flash unbidden on the poet's mind, but they even rise up fleshed in an imagery which is none of his choosing, and from which he can no more sunder them than he can part a soul from its body without losing both; and, most marvellous of all, that he finds them on his lip clothed in words which to himself are wholly new, and which he cannot, dare not, will not, alter, we seem to be utterly unfit to pass any trustworthy judgment on this head. There is verbal inspiration: how is it explained? what is its value? Rede that riddle, ere we attempt one still more knotty.

It was the opinion of Goethe, as related in his Conversations with Eckermann, that every thought truly great is divinely revealed; and that even in the form of its expression, however subject to human influences, there are traces of Divine handiwork. "No productiveness of the highest kind," he says, "no remarkable discovery, no great thought which bears fruit and has results, is in the power of any one: such things are elevated above all earthly control. Man must consider them as an unexpected gift from above, as pure children of God, which he must receive and venerate with joyful thanks. They are akin to the demon which does to him what it pleases, whilst he believes he is acting from his own impulse. In such cases, man may often be considered as an instrument in a higher government of the world, as a vessel found worthy for the reception of a Divine influence. I say this whilst I consider how often a single thought has given a different form to whole centuries, and how individual men have, by their expressions, imprinted a stamp upon the age. There is, however, a productiveness of another kind, subjected to earthly influences, and which man has more in his power, although here also he finds cause to bow before something Divine. Under this category I place all that appertains to the execution of a plan, all the links of a chain of thought, the ends of which already shine forth; I also place there all that constitutes the visible body of a work of art."

The theory of a real inspiration will probably meet with most acceptance and least cavil, as thus put by the greatest of German thinkers. The matter, he considers, divine; the form, human, or at least partly human. Yet even thus we are not a whit nearer the solution of the problem. For, entering that region wherein the existence of human influences may to a certain extent be assumed, what do we know? Be it human or divine, what do we know of the act of creating? As in the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth before he said, Let there be light, and there was light; so in every case, creation is a work of darkest obscurity. The unconsciousness necessary to productive energy is an effectual bar to any thoroughgoing knowledge of the process; and to attempt such knowledge is in truth as if one riding at full speed were to stop his horse that he may see how it gallops; or, as if a sleeper should awake with a view to the examination of dreaming; for the unconsciousness almost amounts to a deep sleep when the energy is at its height. Dumbiedykes, in the Heart of Mid-Lothian, is shrewdly advised by his dying father to plant trees, for they grow while we are asleep. Good and great thoughts are in this like trees: they grow to size, put forth leaves and bear fruit without our care, and without watching of any kind. Perhaps nothing great has ever been attained by conscious effort. "Tarry thou the Lord's leisure," says the Psalmist; "Attention is the prayer of the intellect," says Malebranche;

and such is the attitude of every true worshipper in the temple of knowledge, an attitude of patient waiting. Newton confessed that to his patience he owed everything. An apple plucked from the tree was the death and ruin of our race; an apple falling from the tree told the story of the stars.

While the mystery of Genesis thus baffles, it also continually allures inquiry, from that of the child, who daily and hourly digs up the seeds planted in his garden that he may see how they are growing, to that of the man, who searches into the rise and growth of ideas. And there would seem to be no reason to doubt, rather good reason to hope, that such inquisition will not be altogether vain. It is to be hoped, that, in asking for an egg, we shall not receive the scorpion of self-consciousness into our bosoms, and that we may at least be rewarded with an eggshell, I mean, some superficial knowledge of the forms assumed by the active principle in the course of its development. The coach that passed five minutes ago fixes the word that shall be used five minutes hence; the soft gliding of a swan and cygnets on the river makes the movement of a verse; perhaps the cawing of a rook, the pat saying of a parrot, the song of a canary, the music of the waits, or something equally foreign, will, unknown to yourself, decide your judgment of what I am now writing; and what should hinder us from gaining some deeper knowledge than at present we possess of the laws of association, by which

those influences work? What was there in the nature of things to prevent John Dennis, the great, from writing that work which Steele described as in progress, showing "from reason and philosophy why oysters are cried, cardmatches sung, turnips and all other vegetables neither cried, sung, nor said, but sold with an accent and tone natural neither to man nor to beast"? Perhaps criticism may yet accomplish the feat, fathoming all the depths of "Old Clo'," and reaching all the heights of "Caller oo." Here, however, nothing so high nor so low will be attempted. In the following remarks it is proposed simply to glance at the history of art in so far as its development in the individual and in the national soul are alike.

I. It is very true that the chief end of poesy is pleasure: but we must beware of understanding this too loosely. A thing of pleasure we are not wont to regard as of need; we may have it or not according as we choose; in common parlance we may have it at pleasure, that is, at will. Is poesy, then, the offspring of human will, or of an unavoidable instinct?

Up to a certain point, it will be readily admitted that the expression of our feelings generally, therefore of poetic feeling, is unavoidable. Says Malcolm in Macbeth,

> "Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak
> Whispers the o'erfraught heart, and bids it break."

So Alvarez in Aaron Hill's tragedy of Alzira:

> "Words will have way, or grief, supprest in vain,
> Will burst its passage with the outbursting soul;"

and many more; all of whom but echo the words so well known to every one, "Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh." These statements may be taken as acknowledging the fact, as beautiful illustrations of it also, but are by no means to be regarded as explanatory. For it is remarkable, that even when the cause of our feeling—say grief—is in nothing weakened, but remains in full force, and perhaps may have been strengthened, the merely having given utterance to our sorrow yesterday, lightens it to-day and for ever. We can easily understand how, by simply putting our feelings into words for the benefit of another, or into a journal for no other eye than our own, they should for the time cool down, writing and speaking being in their nature so much more cold-blooded than is feeling; but why they should, as they often do, remain cool for ever after, is not so clear. And we find the same law in the head as well as in the heart; for burn as we may to communicate our knowledge, when once we have done so—whether we have really made it known to some one, or only written it on paper, placing that paper in a desk, we have often no more desire to tell it, and cease even to think of it; or, if we do so, it comes up in some new shape, or linked with some new fact.

Bearing this in mind, that to write in a diary, or, as Bacon tells, the speaking to a statue, gives often as much relief as speaking to a friend; it will be evident that to account fully for the necessity felt more or less by all thus to express what is passing within them, we must look to something deeper than the social impulse, we must go down to the instincts of the individual man. Now, it is clear, that what first of all we want is to make a memorial. The prisoner who writes on the dim wall of his dungeon, the lone traveller who builds a cairn, the copper Indian notching his club, is satisfied with this, and with nothing short of this. And what is it but the working of the instinct of self-preservation? the instinct of immortality, an instinct which is no doubt most often found in league with the social feelings, but which, as surely as we have been so framed that in the life to come we shall be like the angels of God, neither marrying nor giving in marriage, is in reality concerned only with our individual selves. In this instinct, every word that we utter, all remembrancers whatsoever, much more those of the poet, are rooted. He, far more than other men, is influenced by "the pleasing hope, the fond desire, the longing after immortality." This it is which throws a lustre on the meanest work of art. It dignifies the very rattling of a chatterbox.

This hope, however, this desire is not to be confounded with a thirst of fame. It may take that shape; as

was most remarkably seen in the Elizabethan poets; but such a feeling is no essential part of it.

> " Dan Chaucer, well of English undefiled,
> On fame's eternal bederoll worthy to be filed:"

Here is but one out of a hundred such expressions that might be culled from the poets of Elizabeth. A poor man is Chaucer if eternal fame is all that he has earned; and how very poor are those who, having sought the bubble reputation, have never found it! This hope might have comforted the heart of a heathen: it was natural that the Spartan kings in going to battle should sacrifice to the muses, with a prayer that, if they died in the fight, they might at least live in song; but it will not much move a believer in that Gospel which has brought Life and Immortality to light. And if ever expressed in the writings of Christian poets, it is surely in its right place when there found in the pages of those whose Allfather is the superannuated Jupiter, whose Mediator is a Cupid, and whose inspiration is begged of those ladies who haunt the garrets of Parnassus. It will be found, indeed, in the history of English poesy, that, according as poets rejected the heathen gods, they learned to make light of fame. In the Verses by a Lady of Quality, Pope ridiculed the modern worship of Olympus, and in all that he has written he has likewise professed to hold fame cheap. Later still, when our poesy had been thoroughly cleansed of

the heathen hypocrisy, we find Goldsmith, in the preface to his Essays, making merry with the idea of fame by drawing a bill upon posterity, thus:

"Mr Posterity,

"Sir,

"Nine hundred and ninety-nine years after sight hereof, pay the bearer or order a thousand pounds worth of praise, free from all deductions whatsoever, it being a commodity that will then be very serviceable to him, and place it to the account of, &c." And now perhaps it is not too much to say that our best writers, without overlooking or undervaluing the advantage and the pleasure of fair renown, would not only refuse to consider fame as anything more than the means to an end, and think it beneath them to place their highest happiness on such a stake, but even regard with a kind of loathing the expressions of those who do. It would be wrong to make an exception even of the guess hazarded by Sir James Mackintosh that a man after all might be content to find his immortality in the memories of his fellow-men; a fleeting fancy which he would never openly and heartily have avowed. The only imperishable fame, the only fame for a Christian, the only fame to satisfy the man who will for a moment rise above himself, would be the everlasting remembrance of Him who inhabiteth eternity; for the sake of which he would dare, and might well dare, enter the darkest gate of death, and

be no more, utterly forgetting as otherwise utterly forgotten.

The instinct of immortality, then, which belongs to every man, but above all to the artist, is not to be mistaken for a lust of renown. The poet seeks to preserve himself, not to preserve his name, which indeed is no part of himself. His name and the glory of his name exist not in his own mind, but have their being altogether in the thoughts of others. It is himself and all that really belongs to him, all that is his by birthright, or that he has made his own by conquest of love, his country and his times, whatever he has seen or heard or thought or felt; not things, but his own ideas of things, that he desires and attempts to keep in memory, as on that faculty depends the assurance of his own identity. Daily a man comes in contact with Death, and with Oblivion, the deputy of Death. After he has thought, his thoughts vanish; after he has spoken, his words evaporate; after he has acted, his actions hide their faces; and the artist desires not simply an Amrit, or drink of Immortality, by which to preserve the essential Me; he desires by works of art to insure the continued existence of those passing thoughts and words and actions. He therefore more or less consciously feels that it is his to sing, to build, to mould, to paint, for eternity. Such may not be the event; his works may be altogether lost, or, as in the case of Ossian, they may be at best like that echo in Nor-

mandy, the Echo of Génétay, where a person speaking will hear only his own words, while those at any distance can catch only their echoes; but this does not enter into his reckoning. He composes because he cannot help composing; he is driven to perpetuate his thoughts by an unavoidable instinct, that he may say, as Horace said when he ushered into the world the first collection of his odes,—

> "Non omnis moriar! multaque pars mei
> Vitabit Libitinam."

If these views be correct it must be evident that the primary source of art is a private, not, as is commonly supposed, a social impulse, such as a desire to please or to do good. It is an impulse that would move to composition as well in a lonely Juan Fernandez as in the theatres of Athens or in the galleries of London; and he who will not yield to its influence must pine and die, concealment, like a worm i' the bud, gnawing at the heart. The reader must often have marked how authors, of whom Pope is one, declare in a preface that they began to compose for their own pleasure, and that they publish hoping to please their neighbours. In the life of Congreve, referring to The Old Bachelor of that writer, Samuel Johnson speaks of this avowal as a strange affectation, and perhaps this is the light in which it is commonly viewed. Almost every preface, at least when prefixed to a work of imagination, may

be regarded as a wonderful affectation, reminding one of the mediæval legend about the young lions, who, it would seem, are born dead and so remain till on the third day their father comes and startles them into life by his roaring; for by some such prefatory roar it is the habit of an author to set his dead bantlings upon their legs. But the above form of preface is not peculiarly strange nor peculiarly affected; it is rather a truism which ought never to be repeated, which ought mercifully to be taken for granted. Necessity is laid upon the artist to compose in the first instance for himself: to compose for the eye or ear of another is an afterthought.

While these feelings more or less influence the artist of every epoch, and at every period of his life, it is to be observed that they chiefly prevail in the earliest, that is to say, in the Lyrical era. Lyrics are the first-fruits of art, the early figs; and, as already has been shown (p. 119), the idea of a Lyric is Immortality. Such also is the governing idea of that Oriental art and life, in the midst of which the Lyric has ever sprung up in the greatest perfection. Of this perhaps no proof could be afforded more striking than the fact that, in proportion to the whole of the known remains of Eastern art, a vast number connect themselves with the tomb. Almost all that we know of Egyptian art is derived from the monuments of the dead; and although probably we are indebted in like degree to the sepulchres of no other people, unless to those of the Etruscans, a

race of Lydian descent and of the true Eastern type, still in this, as in so many other points, the Egyptian fact is but the extreme instance of a peculiarity common to most Oriental nations. Deep and full of interest as is the mystery of life and death to every child of Adam, none have gazed upon it so wonderingly, none have brooded over it so earnestly, as those who dwell in the great nursery of the human race. There was mother Eve tempted to eat of the tree of life; there the Chaldean shepherds, in attempting by astrology to learn from the stars the secrets of life, laid the foundations of a new science; there the Arabic sages founded another great science in endeavouring by alchymy to discover the elixir of life. And under the eye of heaven there is not a more touching sight than is presented by the Oriental artists when they so often enter the tombs to protest against dissolution. The Etruscans arranged the houses of the dead as if they were houses of the living, with panelled walls and fretted ceilings, elbow-chairs, footstools, benches, wine-flagons, drinking-cups, ointment-phials, basins, mirrors, and other furniture; and the Orientals generally, by painting, by sculpture, by writing, have this habit of, as it were, chalking in large letters upon their sepulchres, NO DEATH.

But the moralists of a certain school will exclaim with horror that, at this stage of its development, art must be very selfish. And so it is in the sense in

which it may also be said that the Lyric is egotistic, and that the Orientals are remarkable for their egotism; but not in a bad sense. When the egotism of the Lyric and of Oriental life generally takes a reprehensible form, it appears not simply nor chiefly as opposed to that disinterestedness which is the charm of social intercourse, although in many cases it does thus show itself; it appears rather in making a God of self. The egoism of philosophy comes at last to this, Ego=GOD; and such, the merely speculative result, the *reductio ad absurdum* of subjective idealism, is often the practical result of Eastern egotism. This may be seen in their theocracies. There has been a great deal of disputing in our day as to the nature of the relationship that ought to subsist between Church and State. Only under Christianity, only under a religion that, asserting the freedom of the will, insists upon individual responsibility, could it for a moment be supposed that the one might be wholly independent of the other. In ancient Greece the Church and State were one, and the question whether the former might ever wield the power of the sword, or the latter the power of the keys, would to a Greek seem as trifling as to us would be the question whether a man might ever use a knife with his left hand or a fork with his right. Unlike the Christian as unlike the Greek, the Oriental not seldom lived under a theocracy in the strictest sense of the term: that is to say, the State was not

simply the Church, it was the Deity; the King was more than a high priest, he was very God, or the vicar of God. Nor is this the only way in which the Orientals have signalized themselves by the assumption of Divinity: all sacred writings are of the East. Whether truly or not, and whether it be in the Bible, in the Koran, in the Shasters, in the Vedas, or in other books, the wise men of the East have put forward the most remarkable claims; they profess to utter divine oracles, and this, not simply by revealing the will, but even in some cases by repeating the words of the Most High. Nay, there was one sect of Mohammedans, the Sonnites or orthodox, who, in opposition to the Motazalites and Schiites, maintained to the death that the Koran is uncreated and eternal. Finally, is there not a world of meaning in that story of Psapho who, in the Libyan desert, taught the birds to say and thus to spread a report that Psapho is a God?

II. This leads us to the second, a higher stage of artistic progress. For the deifying of self above mentioned is but the premature development of a great truth; the lyrical anticipation of an epic idea. That Immortality, through which alone Good is possible, is the dream of the lyric. But in striving after this it very soon and naturally becomes a question, How is Immortality itself possible? and it is readily perceived that to God alone belongs in any strict sense and as an

essential attribute Everlasting life. This truth is perceived by the lyrical as well as by the epic artist; but the former in the mingled blindness of haste and egotism leaps to a wrong conclusion. He willeth his own immortality; then, discerning how alone it is possible, he willeth his own Divinity. Such was the tragedy of Eden. Yearning after immortality, our first parents would be as Gods possessed of the secret of immortality. Or, if not to this, the Oriental goes to the other extreme, and looks forward to the abolition of his own individuality, when at death his life shall return to God who gave it, and he shall be swallowed up and for ever lost in the Divine.

Not so does it fare with the Greek or epic artist. He too has a craving for immortality, and to him also comes in due time the query, Is it possible? and how is it possible? With him, however, the result is, that he is content to deny self, content to be naught, content to die that he may thus truly live. Even when, in his most lyrical mood, the Greek displays so much of self-seeking as to pant for deathless renown, he is clearly willing so far to deny himself as to merge his own immortality in that of his race. For, rightly understood, does not the desire of fame amount to this: Though I, an individual, go hence, yet my race will survive—survive perhaps for ever; and, content to die, since death is inevitable, I hope in the remembrance of that race to live everlastingly. But, in

epic mood, the artist goes much farther, insomuch that his feeling may be regarded as the very antipodes of lyrical. Burning for immortality, he soon discovers that it is not an inherent property of the Ego; but he finds it in the Non-ego, he finds it only in God. What then? Can you understand how he should acquiesce in such a state of things? Understand it or not, he does acquiesce, and this acquiescence ever is the turning point of a man's life, by which he passes from what Mr Carlyle would call the everlasting No to the everlasting Yes. Of self, says the artist, I will think no more, talk no more,—let me think and speak of eternal realities, whatever these may be; I may or may not achieve immortality, but whether life or death be mine, I will live and die in the presence of the Eternal. In a word, he prizes immortality as much as ever, but now no longer for himself nor for its own sake; he prizes it as characteristic of the alone true, the alone real, the alone Divine.

Reality: after stating this to be the grand object of Greek or epic art, is it any contradiction to say that the Greek or epic artist above everything sought after the Divine ideal? It is but another version of the same statement; the Divine ideal being the only steadfast reality. And perhaps it is in this form that the truth will most readily be recognised, for it is the version most commonly received; in fact, so commonly received that, opening any treatise on the nature of art, whether

a college essay or an academy lecture, an article or a volume, we find it blazoned on every page that the Greek strove heart and hand to embody the ideal, to incarnate the Divine. For the ablest, the fullest, the most eloquent, and in every way the best exposition of this, the theology of art, the reader is referred to Mr Ruskin's work on Modern Painters. It is true that he there says little or nothing directly bearing on the productions of Greek art, but the whole of his work is written from a Greek, that is, an epic or historical point of view.

All art is of necessity more or less historical. Even when most exclusively lyrical in form as well as in spirit, even in music, even in the dance, it has to a certain extent the effect of history; and indeed every overt act of which man is capable partakes of the same nature, so as willingly or unwillingly to tell a tale. It must be evident, however, that there is a class of works which are historical in a much narrower sense, historical not simply in effect, but also in design. In the lyric the poet merely puts his own existence to the proof, merely desires to perpetuate that existence by its reproduction under new forms, in a word, merely displays what the Orientals have always remarkably displayed, and what a phrenologist would call philoprogenitiveness. The spirit of the true historian, however, is not thus philoprogenitive, it is rather acquisitive. He desires to take possession of the Non-ego, and to make

it a possession for ever—*κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί*. In search of the essentially true and real, he very soon finds that it is not in the Me, that it is uncreate, that it is Divine; and he endeavours by historical belief and historical records to make the Divine a human possession. The Muses were daughters of Zeus and of Mnemosyne; their ideas were of heaven, their arts were but arts of Memory.

III. Here enters Christianity, not simply giving to mankind an historical revelation of certain Divine facts, but also, as its chief glory, imparting to the soul of the believer a Divine life; and that makes all the difference between Olympian and Christian, epic and dramatic art. The epic artist gazes upon the Divine from afar; and whether he gives utterance in lyrical, in narrative, or in imitative forms to what he has thus apprehended, he does it with an eye to history: this or that is worth knowing, worth remembering, worth having, let it therefore be recorded with indelible inks and with pens of iron. The dramatic artist, however, draws nearer to God, is transformed into the Divine likeness, and begins to imitate for the sake of imitating. The epic artist beholding something divine, say, in a flower, if he be a painter, endeavours with his pencil to imitate its shape and hues; but this, only that he may appropriate the divine something as by a bond or deed of security. On the other hand, the dramatist, when he sees the godly existence of a plant, puts himself

into the position of a plant, becomes in some sense a flower, thus appropriates by a profound fellow-feeling its divine life, and with pencil and palette projects upon the canvass what is now a reflection as much of himself as of the flower. In so doing, he is virtually an historiographer; but he is not such an historian as Mr Ruskin describes in his pamphlet on the Pre-Raphaelites. His object is not history, although in a manner more or less historical he gives expression to his sympathy.

That one word, Sympathy, implies the whole of dramatic art; to unfold which in all its details would require the masterly hand of Adam Smith, whose Theory of Moral Sentiments, although by no means a complete solution of purely ethical problems, might nevertheless furnish a model for the satisfactory treatment of dramatic ideas in their most general bearings; as a treatise on the drama in its loftiest bearing, might be entitled, like that of Thomas à Kempis, *De Imitatione Christi.* Here there is room but for a very few remarks.

The decisive act which renders a man truly Christian, is essentially a dramatic act. It may appear in various forms, and it may be described in various ways, some of them strong, some of them weak; yet, however appearing, and however described, we may in every case detect the dramatic element. For example, what Saint Paul calls Faith as distinguished from what Saint James calls

Faith, the Saving Faith distinguished by theologians from Historical; at bottom what is it, but a dramatic feeling as distinguished from an epical? The following account of it, as the faith of Saint Paul, is given by F. W. Krummacher, and certainly in very daring terms: "The eagle eye of his faith had learned to gaze upon Christ in those higher, spiritual, and mysterious relations in which he stands as the Head, Intercessor, and second Adam of his people. *Thou* sayest to Jesus, How glorious art thou! *Paul*, How glorious am I in thee! *Thou*, Christ was obedient: *Paul*, I obeyed in Christ. *Thou*, Christ suffered, died, rose again and ascended into heaven: *Paul*, I suffered in Gethsemane, I died on the cross, the Father justified me on the third day, and placed me in Christ in heavenly places. *Thou*, Christ has sat down triumphant on high: *Paul*, I sit down above in my Head, and triumph. On looking at Christ, *thou* only feelest thy distance from the Holy One: *Paul*, on the contrary, rejoices in his union with the same. *Thou* thinkest of his people only as forming a third party: *Paul* looks upon himself and his brethren as growing into one man with Christ. *Thou* makest a distinction between him and thyself: *Paul*, on the sunny height of his evangelical illumination, beholds this distinction dissolved, and extols himself when he extols Christ. *Thou* art still fearful in the presence of the majestic and righteous God: *Paul* thinks, Shall I be afraid at the sight of my own purity? for as he is so are we also in

this world." Such is the strong language of an extreme Calvinist; and it is here quoted simply as a very forcible statement of what preachers have often great difficulty in explaining, the *manner* in which what they call historical faith differs from what they call saving faith, showing that the former is truly an epic, the latter truly a dramatic, reception of the Gospel. Even those who would shrink from a statement so bold, even those who disown the doctrine of imputed righteousness, even those who, going still further, reject altogether the idea of an atonement, cannot, and do not explain away, so as to rid of their dramatic meaning, those texts of Scripture which speak of dying with Christ, being buried with Christ, rising with Christ, living with Christ, having a life hid with Christ in God, reigning with Christ, putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. There is, in fact, no class of Christians who do not regard the essence of the Christian life as being in some sort the dramatic appropriation by each believer of what properly belongs to the Saviour alone. There have been doubts as to who the Saviour is, and as to what he has done, but whoever he may be, and whatever he may have done, it is on all hands admitted that the essential of Christianity is this adoption of his life and of his acts. Differences of historical faith will, of course, affect the value of such dramatic adoption; if one man believes that Jesus was Divine, while another believes it not, they will dramatically identify them-

selves with two widely different beings, and the effects will be different accordingly: that, however, is nothing to the case before us. The point to be observed is, that the religious life of a Christian is essentially dramatic, and that herein it is distinguished from every other. Is it wonderful that dramatic art should spring up with unexampled vigour under the influence of a religion which thus systematically teaches and trains its votaries to dramatise?

It will thus be clearly seen that the passage from epic to dramatic art is akin to the development of historical into what theologians have not very happily called saving faith. That this development should be possible, that man, gazing upon the Divine, should be more than a witness and historian, that he should be capable of sympathy and imitation, implies that he has in him something in common with the Godhead. He has Freedom; and, in the exercise of this freedom, we see the radical difference between the epic and the dramatic artist. Historical faith is not in our own power; we can at will neither credit nor discredit: there are the evidences; if they are trustworthy we cannot choose but believe, if they are not, we cannot help doubting. Dramatic faith, however, is very much, if not entirely, a matter of choice; we may, or may not, according to our pleasure, put ourselves into this or that situation, and adopt such or such sentiments. Hence, the historian is bound and is willing to take things exactly as he finds them, rejecting naught, and selecting naught;

while the dramatist, on the contrary, asserting his own freedom, is determined to pick and choose.

The artist, thus free, is in very truth a creator, since, where freedom is, there evidently is power to originate. And, in passing, let it be observed, that this viewing of the artist as a creator is peculiar to the criticism of modern or dramatic art: in Greek criticism, such a view is, if not wholly overlooked, at any rate caught with few and hurried glances. The theory of Plato, that every human maker, whether artist or artisan, is but a copier of certain archetypal ideas which are either uncreated or created by God, and which, at all events, are independent of the human worker, however Platonic in the manner of its enunciation, expresses not simply the opinion of an individual; it expresses the sentiment that pervades Greek art and criticism. He who made the first harp, the first watch, or the first telescope, was, strictly speaking, no inventor, no creator; he but copied a pre-existent idea, the remembrance of a pre-existent state: such is Plato's manner of saying, what in one shape or another every Greek would have allowed, that art is but historical or mirror-like. To us, on the contrary, art is much more than a mirror; it is creative. True it is, that modern art, being dramatic, is in its nature imitative; but that is no contradiction. To imitate the Divine, and that in the spirit not of epic, but of dramatic art, is to create. For, in the sympathy and appropriation of a dramatist, as already has been

said, freedom is implied; and what is freedom, if not in some sort the power to originate?

And now will be understood the wide range of dramatic art. It is in the exercise of Freedom that the human mind has a relationship and fellow-feeling with the Divine; and, conversely, wherever we see Freedom, there we trace Divinity, since Freedom belongs only to God, or to those with whom God has shared the Divine franchise. And of this Divine franchise are we not all more or less partakers? We are, and it is because we are, that the drama is so intensely human. In Greek, or epic art, men are but the chessmen of the gods; the gods are all in all. Dramatic art, on the other hand, giving to man the authorship of his own actions, and thus recognising that he too is Divine, that he too is an electric, not a mere conductor, delights to exhibit the Divine gift of freedom exercised in that field which is best known, the field of human endeavour. And even a wider circuit is embraced by dramatic art. For, wherever Beauty is, there also is Freedom, as the breath of its life; while ugliness, like sin, is a willing bondage. The dramatist, therefore, rejoices to declare his sympathy not only with God, not only with man, but also with all nature, everything capable of beauty, everything that seems capable of that freedom which is "the glorious liberty of the sons of God."

Such is a very rapid outline of the development of art as it appears in the history of the individual, Shakespere, for example, or Byron; as it appears in the history of nations, Greece, Italy, England; and as it has appeared in the history of the mighty race to which we belong, which is sometimes called the White, sometimes the Caucasian, and which, embracing the Arab, the Pelasgic, the Teutonic, and other branches, and spreading over the whole of Europe, the Northern shores of Africa, and the Western half of Asia (not to mention late migrations) has ever claimed and made good its right to stand at the head of the family of man. It will not be supposed, however, that, in asserting the Oriental or Arabian branches of this race to be of a peculiarly lyrical turn, the Greek or Pelasgic to be more deeply imbued with epic ideas, and the Western or Teutonic to be remarkable for their dramatism, it is for a moment denied that other ideas and forms of art but those in which they severally excel are cultivated, and even carried to great perfection, in the different tribes. It is as impossible to ignore the Hindoo dramas, and the Arabic and Persian tales, as to overlook the lyrists and dramatists of Greece, or the songs and romances of Western Europe; and all that is meant is, that, according to the epoch of civilisation, or the stage of development to which they belong, the individual, the people, and the race, will dwell chiefly on ideas of Future, of Past, or of Present; of Immor-

tality, of God, or of Freedom; of Good, of True, or of Beautiful; of the Lyric, of the Epic, or of the Drama.

In old legend there are strange stories told of a basilisk which kills you if it sees you before itself is seen, but which you kill if you can see it before being seen. In this respect, objections are a kind of basilisk; if anticipated they are harmless, if not, they often do a great deal of mischief. I would therefore beg that, since the foregoing sketch has been of necessity so very cursory, the reader will grant me some indulgence if any difficulties should arise, if the meaning has not in every case been made intelligible, or if any of the opinions hazarded seem not to be sufficiently well established. Some of these difficulties will vanish, the doubtful positions will be illustrated, perhaps confirmed, and the whole drift of the sketch will be better understood, if read in the light of the views put forward in the first part of the Third Book, and at page 119 concentrated in a tabular form.

BOOK FIFTH.

THE WORTH OF POESY.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE DEFENCE OF POESY.

THE defence of poesy has already more than once been written; and with more than usual power by a Sidney and a Shelley. Without any slight to these able works, it may, however, be said, that they can have little weight with those who push poetry to defend its own. They are mostly written from the whereabouts of the poet; and the weapon employed is the unsearchable logic of poesy—a logic most true, but too brief for common purposes, a logic swift and untraceable as electricity, flying straight from point to point, unmindful of the turns, the stoppages, and the stages, the ifs, buts, and therefores, of ordinary argument. Such reasoning will seldom hit those who drive poets to the defensive. The poet is thus pressed by two very different personages; by the philosopher, and by one who stands between philosopher and poet, of neither gender, the proser. The proser has been dipt in some unknown Styx that has case-hardened him against almost every weapon

—all but the heel; and there is no way of dealing with him but by putting motion into those heels, I mean, by arousing his activities; and then he will turn, according to his degree, either a poet or a philosopher. If he takes the part of the poet, good and well, nothing more has to be said. If he becomes a philosopher, and still decries the poet, he must be met on the side of his arithmetical understanding with common logic and the rule of three.

In the foregoing pages, it is hoped that somewhat has been advanced, which, in this regard, may be of service; since if anything need and be worthy of defence, the best that can be given is to make known its real nature, and show its true colours. Having already at some length (in Books Third and Fourth) put forward doctrines that illustrate the *positive* worth of poesy, it will here be sufficient to stand wholly on the defensive. Not that in every case, and from every mind, it will be possible to remove objections; but at least they may be silenced. We may spike the guns which we cannot take away.

There is no denying that, however much poesy may be ill-spoken of by some, it has always been well received by the wide world; more heartily welcomed than aught else the work of man; more lastingly kept, and never willingly forgotten. This is not (although it might be) brought forward as a plea in favour of poetry, lest any one should think that plea in danger of

Bacon's remark, that man has in him more of the fool than of the wise, and is more strongly influenced by his foolish than by his reasonable powers; but simply to show, that on the whole poets have no ground for quarrelling with their treatment and their lot on this earth. Pindar, for his poesy, is said to have been loved of Pan, and even to have heard one of his own odes chanted by the god: there is a truth in the story.

Any direct and formal charge is seldom brought against poetry: it is generally assailed by means of clever backstrokes and passing lounges. Oftenest of all, however, with inarticulate sneers. And these attacks come not merely from such as Sir Edward Coke, who, in the exercise of his judicial functions, foredoomed to everlasting pain five classes of men, namely, Chemists, Monopolists, Concealers, Promoters, and Rhyming Poets; but even from such writers as Bacon. The latter have keenly felt the power of poetry, but have been unwilling to own because unable satisfactorily to account for that power, and have fretted and chafed under the yoke. They have often been gifted with no small share of the poetic faculty, and in anticipation of Hahnemann have sought by a small dose of poetic language to cure the poetry of their fellows. Like the monkeys, that, to keep the sailors from landing on their island, pelted them with cocoa-nuts, the very and only thing which was wanted, Bacon pelted the poet with flowers, and tried to stop his mouth

with pleasant words: while others, beside, in rich and glowing language, seek to overwhelm the imagination and its works. They are bent on the same error as the wise men of Gotham, who set about the drowning of an eel. Upon all such, the scorners of poesy, Sir Philip Sidney, in closing the treatise above mentioned, has pronounced a curse which would certainly be very frightful if it would only take effect: "Thus much curse I must lend you in the behalf of all poets, that while you live you live in love, and never get favour for lacking skill of a sonnet; and when you die, your memory die from the earth for want of an epitaph."

Whenever these assailants come to close quarters, and give us a clue to their meaning, it will be found that their objections naturally range themselves under three heads. They say that poesy is not Beautiful, or not True, or not Good. An attempt has already been made in these pages to show that it is all three. It is now behoveful to show the insufficiency of those grounds upon which the doctrine is denied.

CHAPTER II.

BEAUTY OF POESY.

It is objected that Poesy is not beautiful. The objection, indeed, is never stated thus plainly, but rather implied, and implied in such a way, that it might almost be regarded as impugning either the truth or the good of poesy even more than its beauty. Thus parasitically entwined with other and bolder objections, it is not possible to grapple with it singly; and we must therefore consider it as entangled, in the first place with a question of Truth, in the second place with a question of Good.

Of the many forms which objections of the former class may take, the Puritanic seems not yet to have spent itself. "The imaginations of men's hearts are only evil continually," it is said; and therefore from the delights of the imagination we are to call a solemn, a perpetual fast. Such a fast is simply impossible; at best it can only be a Ramazan, which forbids food during the day, but allows it after sunset, since,

if dreams may be banished in our waking hours, they will yet return in the night. Here, the objector, desirous of wielding the lash of William Prynne, or the cudgel of Jeremy Collier, will perhaps point significantly to the license of certain poems, or certain plays, and ask if, with such before his eyes, any right-minded man can allow himself to indulge in the reading of poesy. The foulness of many a poem and many a play is undeniable. Great part of the famous Alexandrian library, which was turned into fuel for the public baths, was unworthy even thus remotely of being applied to a cleanly purpose; and if a Jew had bathed in waters thus warmed, he might with reason have deemed himself unclean as a leper for the remainder of his days. But the fact of certain poems and certain plays being bad, is no more an argument against poesy, than it is an argument against the produce of the hive to say that the bees of Trebisonde feed on poisonous flowers and brew poisonous honey.

It will then be said that at least the imagination is a very unhealthy faculty, and that we ought by all means to keep it down. Even poets have said as much. Shenstone is a delightful companion to all who can relish the manliness, the freedom, the unaffected ease of a hearty, well-witted, and tasteful country gentleman. He deserves to be better known than he is, and not every one will resist the following pleasant invitation, here given as in a manner showing that, when he

chose, he could regard poetry in the light of a healthy and familiar feeling.

> "You who can frame a tuneful song,
> And hum it as you ride along;
> And, trotting on the king's highway,
> Snatch from the hedge a sprig of bay;
> Accept this verse, howe'er it flows,
> From one that is your friend in prose."

Yet the man who could so write, could at another time bring himself to speak of poetry, if not in his very heart to regard it, as a mere sickly hankering. "Poetry and Consumption," he says, "are the most flattering of diseases." Therefore, let poetry yield to philosophy; let the imagination give place to the understanding. It is quite true, that in some minds poetry may become a disease; but so also in other minds may philosophy. And there cannot well be a greater mistake than to oppose Judgment to Imagination, or to consider them, as often they are considered, in the light of a madman and his keeper. It would not be a greater to place knowledge, which is so clear of eye, in opposition to love, which we have been taught to regard as blind; and it is the very same mistake which sets up reason against faith, and makes ignorance the mother of devotion, enlightenment its enemy. Is there, then, it may be asked, no such thing as a wild imagination? In unhealthy minds there is, but nowhere else. If it be answered, that this unhealthiness of mind, and con-

sequent wildness of fancy, is owing to a lack of judgment, an appeal to facts will show that it is not; for then would the mind of the unjudging boy be very sickly, and his imagination crazed; whereas, even when his imagination is most daring, it is sounder than that of the most thoughtful man. In truth, the imagination has very seldom to be curbed; it is continually needing the spur. Very often, from the mere feebleness of this faculty, Dugald Stewart has well said, and not from any coldheartedness, arises that want of feeling with or for others, which is but too frequently charged against our fellow-men; they do not, they cannot, imagine the situation of other people. The idea, indeed, that a poetic imagination is something very weakly, very sickly, will be found to rest upon some vitiated taste, some mistaken view of the nature of poesy. After all that Wordsworth has said, after all that he and others have done, it is too much the fashion to regard poetry as something very unreal, skyhigh, and out of the way; an opinion greatly strengthened, if not chiefly caused, by the habit of looking into a poem, above everything, for the made-pleasure derived from happy and abundant images. Abundant images no more make a poem than any number of swallows make a summer. Doubtless, in its own place, the pleasure of tracing resemblances may be natural enough; it has delighted every one to think the passing cloud a weasel, backed as a camel, or very like a whale. But artificial and absurd

most decidedly it is when desired for its own sake, and regarded, as children regard the sweetmeats at a feast, best and chief. True poetry is as real, as needful, and naturally as common to every man as the blood of his heart and the breath of his nostrils. If poetry were not part and parcel of our being, poesy would not be so widely felt and admired; and it is always but short-lived when, as with Donne and Cowley, it is addressed not to feelings universal and irrepressible, but to the passing taste of a little circle. Of all such poesy, of all poesy whatsoever, we may say that it will "fit audience find, though few;" but this in a sense the very opposite of that which Milton intended; in the sense in which we might also say that it will fit welcome find, though small.

As thus far considered, the objection, by casting a slur upon the *origin* of poetic pleasure, is connected with a question of truth. It comes to this: Poesy may be very beautiful, but it is the offspring of disease. The fact for which we contend is here admitted in words, denied in reality; since that which others may regard as beautiful can awaken no admiration, but rather contempt, in the mind of one who associates it with a corrupt source.

Unable to hold this, the objector falls back upon the other ground above mentioned. Harping no longer upon the evil cause, he now begins to harp upon the worthless effect. Thus, instead of connecting his de-

nial of the beauty with a denial of the truth of poesy, he now connects it with a denial of the good: Poesy may be very fine, very beautiful; but where is the use of it? Here again, the point at issue is in so many words admitted, in reality is denied; since what to another may be beautiful is not so to the man who can see in it no use whatsoever.

The utilitarian is not the only, nor is it the highest test of beauty; but rightly understood and applied, it is trustworthy, and it is a test by which the lovers of poesy would be willing to abide. They do not complain of the test, but of its wrong application. They complain that poesy is measured by utilities of the very lowest order. It is often valued at nothing, because its effect is not bodily before our eyes. Bartholin declared that ailments, chiefly the falling sickness, were curable by rhymes; Dr Serenus Sammonicus offered to cure a quartan ague by laying the fourth book of Homer's Iliad under the head of the patient; and Virgil was once believed to be an excellent fortune-teller. But since poesy can do no such marvels, it is regarded as a mere game of words, a solemn trifling, wilder far than the wildest and most foolish extravagances on which the old scholastic philosophers wasted their time and blunted their wits. Of persons who so think it is enough to say that they utterly mistake the calling, the aim, and the work of the poet. The Troubadour gave to his calling the name of El Gai Saber, the gay

science: to suppose however that gravity of purpose may not exist under this gayety of mien is to imitate the poor satyr who was so greatly puzzled to understand how a man could blow hot and cold with one and the same mouth. The avowed object of the poet is pleasure; but he has laid in ambush other ends as mighty and as earnest as any that rule mankind. If he seems to have his eye set upon the world, it is only as a rower who is pulling further and further away. The readers of the Tatler were in an early number informed that when any part of that paper appeared dull they were to believe that the dulness had a design. It was not a bad joke; but will it not be far more credible, as it is most true, that the poet under the air of frolic has more or less consciously a serious purpose? Shenstone truthfully paints the village schoolmistress as sitting disguised in looks profound: on the contrary, the greatest of all teachers comes masked in smiles, a winebibber, half drunken with joy. Therefore he is unknown. Therefore, also, his work is constantly misjudged; deemed most useless when haply it is most useful; and deemed shallowest where perhaps it is deepest. A very weighty thought, if it have ornament sufficient, may rise like a balloon till it go out of sight and none but sharp eyes can see it. By itself it is heavy as ballast; when joined to the volatile gas it seems to be lighter than air.

CHAPTER III.

TRUTH OF POESY.

It is objected that Poesy is not true; and this, although not a very formidable charge, is certainly more formidable than the foregoing. It carries an air of reason that has staggered not a few; at least it has staggered many more and much stronger minds than have been swayed by the other objection. And as it is more forcible, so also does it wax bolder. For, whereas the former was stated covertly—advanced and withdrawn in the same breath—this objection is stated fearlessly and openly; it is stated point blank. Poesy is false. Whatever the poet handles he changes into a lie. Macamut, Sultan of Cambaya, lived on poison, and thus became so deadly that flies alighting on his finger and all who drew near him were speedily killed. Even so, the poet has fed all his days on leasing, and is so thoroughly compacted of imagination that no truth can come near him and live. At once it is stricken

dead, and he so covers it with wit that it becomes a perfect pillar of salt.

If it is to be regretted that poesy should ever have been thus regarded as fiction, it is still more to be lamented that poets should have to blame themselves most of all for the currency of that mistake. They have fostered it by precept as well as by example. When King Charles II. reproached Edmund Waller with having written a poem in honour of the Restoration inferior to that which he had formerly composed in praise of Cromwell, here is the answer made: "Sir, the poet succeeds better in fiction than in truth;" and what a muster-roll of poets and poetasters might be called, who, if possessed of Waller's ready wit, would without scruple have vouchsafed the selfsame reply. If they have not all had opportunities of uttering such a sentiment, they have all had it in their power to countenance or to discountenance it by their example; and by their example they have too often given it their countenance. Clinging to dead or dying mythologies, as they often did, with a faith which could never be enduring, it could not but be seen and said that they were setting up mere wooden idols. By degrees men came to the conclusion that poets could set up only wooden idols, and then completing the circle, came round to the belief that for this very cause the old mythologies had never had any life, never had any truth whatsoever. Bacon, who had written his Wis-

dom of the Ancients expressly to show the many and profound truths that are embedded in the classical legends, was notwithstanding, if in other of his writings we can suppose him to be in earnest and not in jest, quite certain that the Greeks had little or no settled faith in their mythology; and he thinks it reason enough to repeat the same joke in the same words, that nothing else could be expected "when the chief doctors and fathers of their church were the poets."

This remark of Bacon's will indicate but too clearly the view which he and other philosophers have been disposed to maintain. When the poet acknowledges that his work is fictitious, there is no shame in his confession; he admits that he has been telling untruth, and yet his confession has so little meaning that he attaches neither guilt nor dishonour to the act. The charge wears a very different, it wears a more serious aspect in the hands of the philosopher; and, if proven, would be more than enough to consign every poet, every poem, to the limbo of everlasting infamy, and to show how unspeakably wretched is man in being cursed of God with a faculty whose highest and whose lowest and whose never-ceasing business it is to lie.

In what is perhaps rightly entitled to the first place among those wonderful Essays, all brimming with wit, wisdom, and winning eloquence, in the Essay on Truth Bacon avers that the mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure, and leaves us to infer, nay pointedly declares

that the pleasure of imagination and poesy comes of the same house and lineage.

"The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind!"

So he has been called. Is it Bacon the wisest, Bacon the brightest, or Bacon the meanest of mankind who speaks in that Essay? Whatever be the character in which he speaks, his views are seconded by other and later philosophers. Locke, in mapping out the human understanding, entirely ignored the existence of an imaginative faculty; and if others have found it impossible to disown the imagination altogether as a thing beneath their notice, they have yet been willing to treat it as a poor sinful outcast, upon whose devoted head may be laid all the iniquities and errors of the human mind, every one of which it must carry, like a scapegoat, into a wilderness of its own imagining. Bishop Butler declares it to be the "author of all error;" a statement which at once falls to the ground if it can be shown that there is any other source whatsoever. It would not be difficult to point out cases in which his vaunted reason is itself and by its very nature, an untruthful medium, as, for instance, in the observation of circumstances fitted to awaken emotion. In such a case reason is like a fire-screen of plate glass through which one can see the fire without feeling the heat. This, however, is unimportant in comparison with other examples which might be afforded. Mr Baynes, in

the very able notes to his translation of the Port Royal Logic, says of Pomponatius :—" He was a man of acute and active intellect, and found—what all men who think long enough and deep enough will find—that the action of pure intellect in relation to vital truths inevitably issues in an intellectual lie; that the last result of reason is scepticism; that the fruit of the tree of knowledge produces still, as it did of old, death." This is true in itself, striking in its expression, noble as coming from a logician, most remarkable as appearing in a logical treatise.

The poet, as already has been said, in allowing that his work is counterfeit, seems not to be aware that he is guilty of any baseness in producing such. He would think it scorn to tell the thing that is not, and yet he never blushes to own that in poesy he does tell the thing which is not. In truth, his thoughts are at variance with his confession. Appearances are against him, it may be; at all events he admits that they are against him; but secretly his heart bears him witness that he has neither deceived nor attempted to deceive. This would seem to be the only way of accounting for the gross absurdity of the defence with which a writer sometimes professes to meet and to set aside the charge of falsehood. Practically and in his own mind the charge has already been set aside, so that the defence offered is merely to make a show of argument. Thus George Puttenham in his Art of English Poesy, (III. 7.) after

asserting roundly that figures of speech "be occupied of purpose to deceive the ear and also the mind," and that, in short, the poet is a deceiver, puts forward a defence, in the reading of which laughter gives place to pity, pity to anger, and anger to utter astonishment. He says that "our maker or poet is appointed not for a judge but rather for a pleader, and that of pleasant and lovely causes, and nothing perilous, such as be those for the trial of life, limb or livelihood, and before judges neither sour nor severe, but in the ear of princely dames, young ladies, gentlewomen and courtiers, being all for the most part either meek of nature, or of pleasant humour; and that all his abuses tend but to dispose the hearers to mirth and solace by pleasant conveyance and efficacy of speech." False in its facts, absurd in its reasoning, contemptible in its morality, away with such a plea; but let us charitably suppose (though to save his heart at the cost of his understanding) that Puttenham is here in the very common case of a man who, having come to a right conclusion, namely, that the poet is not blameworthy, is ignorant of the steps by which he arrived at it, and, in endeavouring to trace these for the benefit of another, falls into the oddest mistakes, representing himself as having been led by a route which none but a madman would have chosen to follow, and none but a fool would have ventured to describe. Sir Philip Sidney meets the charge more boldly; like a true knight, he denies it: "Of all writers

under the sun, the poet is least a liar." But behold the evidence on the strength of which he makes this denial: "The poet never maketh any circles about your imagination to conjure you to believe for true what he writeth." If we are not to believe it true, we must believe it false; and if he who writes what we are to account false be least a liar of all writers under the sun, and simply because of his confession, the poet would seem to be little better than the confessed robbers of Egypt. As these, if they acknowledged their theft, were entitled to retain a fourth of the plunder, so the poet, making away with verity, is allowed to escape on condition of his giving up the one truth that he has been uttering a parcel of lies. And still the question is untouched, how far it may be right to engage in the perusal of acknowledged falsehoods. Even Johnson's mode of reply will not avail, "Poets profess fiction," he says; "but the legitimate end of fiction is the conveyance of truth;" a Johnsonese rendering of the Spanish proverb so often quoted by Lord Bacon, Tell a lie to find a troth.

Let us look the objection full in the face; and so doing we shall discover that it is founded partly on a mere juggle of words, partly on a gross misunderstanding of the nature of truth.

In fact, whether we can prove it or not, we may rest assured, that, however likely in appearance, there can

be no validity in a charge which, even when admitted, is followed by no sentence of condemnation. At the very worst, the verdict of the jury is, Damages, one farthing. And a still stronger presumptive argument against it might be based on the ground that, of the three kinds of poesy, or, to speak more generally, of all the arts of representation—imitative, narrative, and lyrical, the present objection is applicable, and is applied, only to the second. Imitative or dramatic art is nothing if not true, since an imitation, ceasing to be true, ceases to imitate; and lyrical art is true in a still higher degree, as being the utterance not simply of sentiments truly belonging to this or to that character, but of the own and very sentiments of the artist himself. So that only against the narrative or historical element of art can the objection be raised. And it is curious to observe that it should be raised not against those arts which employ truth as the means to an end, (the drama aiming at the beautiful, and the lyric aiming at the good), but against that epic art which alone has truth for its ultimate end.

At best, however, it is a mere trick of words. Like the conjuror's bottle that will at pleasure produce wine or water, milk or vinegar; fiction, truth, reality, are words any of which will express ideas the most opposite. Our idea of the Duke of Wellington may be true, that is, correct; but it cannot be true, that is, real: hence it is at once true and untrue. There are

ideas, however, which are true neither in the one sense nor in the other, but simply because, like the ciphers of arithmetic or of algebra, they are symbolic of truth. The abstract idea of a triangle, for example, is not a reality, nor is it the mental image of a reality, since all three-sided figures in nature must be scalene, isosceles or equilateral, and the ideal triangle is none of the three. Or, again, the general idea of man answers to no individual in existence; it is neither tall as the Anakim, nor short as the Bosjesmen, nor yet middle-sized; neither black nor white; neither old as Parr nor young as the last infant prodigy; it has eyes, but they are not the blue of the Saxon, nor the jet of the Gipsy, nor the hazel of the Celt, nor the pink of the Albino; it is neither bearded like the Arab nor beardless like the Mongol; it applies to all in general, and to none in particular. Those who assert that such abstract ideas have a real and separate existence, are now no more, unless Pierre Leroux be a Realist, as Mr G. H. Lewes declares; and there remain but the Nominalists and the Conceptualists, the former maintaining that what is called, in the abstract, Man, is only a name, the latter, that it is only a notion. In either case, it is a mere fiction of the understanding, but a true fiction, as coins and counters that are nothing in themselves, may yet be of the greatest value. There is like ambiguity in the use of a phrase which we seem to have derived from the Americans. When they speak of

realizing anything, they do not mean making it real, but simply having a lively idea of it,—the very antithesis. And it is by taking advantage of these ambiguities that the objection against the truth of poesy is made to wear so imposing an aspect.

But the objection consists not merely in ringing the changes upon words of equivocal meaning, it consists in ignorance of the nature of truth, a blindness that is perhaps due to wilfulness quite as often as to carelessness or to stupidity. The world of sense has no douht a reality of its own, yet what are all its passing scenes when compared with more enduring realities? what are they but a vain show, vanity of vanities, accidents of birth and of fortune, of wind and of rain, of time and of place? They are not substantial; they are only phenomenal. And yet, because the poet treats them as shadows, and refuses to treat them as substances, you say that his work is fiction, with an invidious use of the term. You would first have him secure the shadows of time and place, and then look after the substance from which those shadows fall, whereas he more truthfully seizes the substance, and leaves the shadows to fall where they may. Matters of fact! there is no greater dupe than he who implicitly relies upon matters of fact. The travellers, in Gay's fable of the chameleon, each related a matter of fact, and yet all were wrong. The kernel of the dispute lies in the question, whether the truth of a man is to be found in these

facts? whether it is to be found in what he does, or in what he is? The poet asserts that a man's actual doings express but partially the truth of his being; that his actions and the circumstances of his life are but the temporary clothing of certain inner and essential truths; and that to insist upon a strict adherence to such details of costume and external environment is to sacrifice the spirit to the letter.

CHAPTER IV.

GOOD OF POESY.

It is objected that Poesy is not good. And although the objection simply means that the practical influence of the fine arts upon human conduct is to be accounted zero, it is sometimes so worded as to insinuate a suspicion that they may not be favourable to virtue. In admitting the paradox that the artist is no friend to virtue, I must be allowed to extinguish it with another paradox, that he is not therefore a foe to morality.

There is a rule of right, and when human conduct keeps to that rule, let us call it righteousness, or, as in old English, rightwiseness. The rule being ever one and the same, the righteousness must ever be one and the same; but although outwardly one, inwardly it may be more than one. It may arise from different sources in the mind, and these are three. If it proceed from sheer ignorance of evil, it is called innocence; if from a disinclination to evil, it is called holiness; if from the bidding of conscience, it is called

virtue. A child neither sees nor feels the temptation; a saint may see without feeling it; the man of virtue both sees and has to struggle. The two first act according to nature, the former from an inborn, the latter from a renewed nature; the other acts upon principle.

To this it may be replied that virtuous action is also according to nature, and to prove that it is Bishop Butler enters into a long argument. The remark of Sir James Mackintosh, however, must be remembered; which was to the effect that no man so clearheaded has perhaps ever been so darkworded as Butler. His mistakes are more than enough to make one doubt the truth of the well-known maxim that to write clearly you have only to think clearly. It is not because the language of a sermon is unfit for philosophic accuracy that he thus fails: from the pen of Hobbes, of Berkeley, of Hume, has flowed language far more homely, but seldom or never wanting in precision. Of this failing the above is a striking example: while speaking of a life according to nature, Butler is always thinking of a life according to principle. Doubtless, in a certain sense, to act virtuously is to act naturally, but it is so in a sense quite different from that of the common phrase which he has taken hold of and pressed into his service. In the common use of that phrase we speak of a good-natured and of an ill-natured man; we say it is the nature of cherubim to know, the

nature of seraphim to love. Thus a man may be so gentle that not for his life could he do anything unkind; or he may be so highminded that it would be impossible for him to descend to any meanness, so that he is never once visited by that fear of vulgar minds lest peradventure they may do something shabby. This is to act naturally, it is to act instinctively; but to act by the line and rule of conscience is altogether different. In relation to the word in the above meaning, it is to act affectedly. Virtue, therefore, is not natural, as innocence and holiness are: it is affected.

None the worse for that, it may still be replied. And in truth the word affectation has been bandied about very recklessly, as though to affect anything were of itself to do something wrong. We may affect what is good, and so doing, the worst that can be said of us will be that what others accomplish by a strong and certain influence, we accomplish by a weak and uncertain. Weak is it? Dugald Stewart in this country and Victor Cousin in France maintain that conscious endeavour after the right is something higher than mere instinct; that struggle and victory is something better than peace. Right reason, the words of revelation, and the common feeling of mankind, all go against them.

Right reason: for whether is better to eat and drink from appetite, or without hunger and thirst to be guided by a kind of animal conscience, called the

sense of food? There are poor wights to whom almost everything eatable has become a forbidden fruit. Appetite, if not wholly gone, at least cannot be trusted, and a new faculty arises instead, built of the ruins of appetite, the purchases of experience, the findings of reason, and the advice of the doctor, in one word, and in the old use of that word,* a Conscience; not unlike to which is, in its higher sphere, that Conscience known as the sense of duty. Banished from the paradise of God, with dispositions to good either very froward or very weak, at any rate no longer trustworthy, man is guided by a faculty built out of and upon these ruins, a faculty that appoints to every one who will submit a regimen, with which for strictness the regimen of even the strictest physician is no more to be compared than is the rule of King Log to be compared with the rule of King Stork. Those who are chiefly remarkable for their bodily ailments are not commonly liked; if hypochondriac, they are pitied and almost despised; and even so would men tainted with this disease of the soul be regarded, but that we are all of us more or less tainted alike. We do indeed sneer a little at the ascetic, that is, the spiritual hypochondriac; but surely the angels might hold every one of us not much better, and, were it not for the sadness of the tragedy and the depth of their sorrow, have long ago

* "The reason why the simpler sort are moved with authority is the *conscience* of their own ignorance." Hooker, E. P. II. 7. § 2.

made us the butt of all those intelligences that have it in them to laugh.

The words of revelation are also against the theory; for does not the New Testament, on the face of it, bear witness that Love is above Law?

And the common feeling of mankind; for, although Conscience will lead us to do many things good and fair of seeming, we know and feel that, with all their costliness and all their beauty, they are but as pearls which are made by the oyster in covering and smoothing the granules and scruples that trouble it in its bed. Virtue can belong only to a fallen being. Upon this benighted earth there are beings of the same feather as the angels and saints in bliss, there are innocent children, holy men and women; but about virtue, as the very name shows, there is something so strongly human that we cannot well apply the term to any but men. Hume, to illustrate the work of imagination, brings forward the idea of a virtuous horse. Now, we can easily imagine an innocent horse, or a holy angel, but not so well a virtuous Houynhmm or a virtuous Peri. Virtue speaks of trial, sin, and sorrow; of shortcomings and backslidings; of longings that have risen and set in the heart day after day; of hopes to fulfil these longings that have waxed and waned moon after moon; of vows that have sprung with the spring but have, alas! too often fallen long ere the fall of each returning year; and it is hard for us to believe or to imagine, that there

are other beings in the like case. That there are happy and saintly ghosts who cannot sin, and that there are wretched and devilish souls utterly lost to goodness, we know, but we cannot get rid of the belief that this life of sad struggle is peculiar to ourselves.

From this struggle, from this life of conscious endeavour, it is the object of our religion to set us free; herein making good the claim which it so often puts forth to be loved, believed, and carried home as the religion of peace and of joy. It is true that the Christian is remarkably thoughtful; for, in his religion, far from one-sidedness, the energies of the whole man are called forth, wholeness or universality being one of the most striking points of Christianity, as is betokened by the fact, that saving the names of God and a few indispensable parts of speech, there are, if I may trust a general impression, no words that occur so often in the New Testament and in the early Christian writers, as those from the root παν—all, every: still it is not thought, faith it is which stamps him. Our religion sends us down into the pit of self-consciousness, that, as persons at the bottom of a mine, we may see the stars overhead; and it never sends us into those depths, but to come the quicker out.

Similar is the aim of poesy. Like our most holy faith, it is favourable to all the ends of morality, but it is not satisfied with that righteousness which is of the law, and which we call virtue. It would fain put Love

instead of Law; affection for affectation. Its influence is exerted not through a system of teaching, but through a system of training. The student of poesy is not made learned in thoroughbass and counterpoint; he is taught to solfa through the gamut of human emotions. The poet is no preacher of the law, he reads no riot act; he rather preaches a gospel, kindles love, and trusts in the force of those sympathies which lead one man to imitate another, and by means of which Elisha, when he puts on the mantle of the Tishbite, forthwith becomes another Elijah.

If these remarks be just, they prepare us rightly to understand, therefore also rightly to withstand, the charge so often brought against poesy, and against all works of imagination, that they have little actuating power, that, to use the hack illustration, many who will weep in floods for the ideal distresses of story, will move not so much as a finger to relieve the real distresses of life. The parties who make this complaint are not very consistent; for, while they say that the good actions portrayed in poesy have little practical effect upon our behaviour, they maintain, and rightly maintain, that anything bad, which may be there represented, will, upon minds not duly fortified, have great evil effect; thus making Poesy of that incomprehensible family headed by the Irish pig, which will not do a thing when you wish, and will do it when you wish not.

In reply to such a statement, it would be very irksome to repeat the legends of Orpheus and Amphion, the tale of Tyrtæus, the story of Lillibulero, to tell how Chevy Chase affected Sir Philip Sidney, what the Marseillaise hymn has done in France, what the Song of the Shirt has done in England, and, above all, to say what Fletcher of Saltoun said that another man said about ballads. It might thus be shown that the accusation is false, and that while the poet tells his tale, the tale tells powerfully and practically upon those who listen. Waving this, however, the accusation is worthless, even if we allow it to be true.

To what does it amount? To this, that the influence of poesy over our practice is not great in degree. Now, whether in degree it be great or small, is a matter very trifling in comparison with the question, whether in kind it be high or low. In the foregoing pages, no measure has been taken of its degree; let the degree be next to nothing; but an attempt has been made to ascertain its kind, and that kind is the best. The influence of poesy upon our dispositions may be so feeble as not to be traced in our actions; but its influence, even at the weakest, is of a higher order than any which can be brought to bear upon conscience or a sense of duty, and which so often, through that sense alone, without any feeling of love, powerfully and visibly affects practice. So that a man, mighty as leviathan, whose morality is preserved only by the salt of con-

science, though thus preserved for ever, may not be compared with the little child who, without conscience of sin, like a tiny fish in the salt sea, lives fresh, if it be but for one allotted hour. We are so taught by lips that never put yea for nay. Under the reign of Law, in so far as it agreed with that title, obedience was enforced by the spur of conscience, as is shown in the Psalms, where one cannot but be struck with the conscious integrity which the sweet singers of Israel carry about with them, and which in the kingdom of Love, where, in so far as it answers to the title, obedience wells up without effort, is but little known; and of John Baptist, the last prophet of that Law, and the herald of him who was to make the eye itself full of light, the Saviour said, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." It is even so. Great as are the deeds of the law, the least work of love is greater. It is therefore altogether away from the point at issue to say, with whatever truth it may be said, that poesy is weak of influence upon our practical life, or weaker than the influences that work through conscience. It is influence of the healthiest. Do you say that the first faint call of appetite, when the life of the dying man begins to return, is less or more to be desired than the largest demands of the hypochondriac? Or, do you quarrel with Zephyr be-

cause not equal to Euroclydon? Nay, is not Zephyr the very wind you pray for? the wind blowing right on your course? and how can you take advantage of Euroclydon without much and weary doubling?

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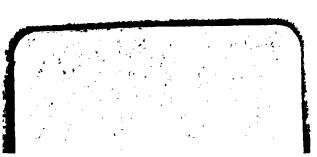
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